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The creation of the modern Republic of Korea Navy

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**THE CREATION OF THE MODERN REPUBLIC OF
KOREA NAVY**

IAN BOWERS

**DEPARTMENT OF WAR STUDIES
KING'S COLLEGE LONDON**

**SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR OF
PHILOSOPHY**

2013

ABSTRACT

The modernisation of the Republic of Korea Navy from the election of Kim, Young-sam in 1993 to the sinking of the *Cheonan* has been remarkable in that it is a microcosm of the security dilemma that the ROK faces; how to deal with the threat from the DPRK while developing a defence capability that is commensurate with a middle power with global interests.

This thesis examines said modernisation both through an analysis of the force development program and its driving factors. Its original contribution is in its use of previously unavailable sources and author conducted interviews to demonstrate for the first time that ROKN modernisation in its nature, drivers and hindrances is a synthesis of a multitude of factors both internal and external.

While much focus has been on the developing regional capability that the ROKN has pursued, this thesis demonstrates that regional capability is part of a wider force improvement program which encompasses C4ISR, strike and power projection capabilities aimed at meeting all of the threats both current and future that the ROK perceives.

What has driven such modernisation is a focal point of the thesis, demonstrating that while the East Asian maritime security environment and the development of the Korean People's Navy has played an important role, the decision to construct a more powerful navy is ultimately an expression of the ROK's political and economic development. This thesis concludes however with the caveat that force modernisation is ultimately dependent on political support and incidents such as the sinking of the *Cheonan* have a large bearing on the nature and extent of naval modernisation.

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ABBREVIATIONS

| | |
|----------|---|
| AAW | Anti-Air Warfare |
| ACV | Armoured Combat Vehicle |
| ANDVT | Advanced Narrowband Digital Voice Terminal |
| AIP | Air Independent Propulsion |
| AOE | Ammunition Oil Equipment |
| AORH | Ammunition Oil Resupply Helicopter |
| ARF | ASEAN Regional Forum |
| ARM | Anti-radiation Missile |
| ASEAN | Association of Southeast Asian Nations |
| ASM | Anti-ship Missile |
| ASROC | Anti-Submarine Rocket |
| ASUW | Anti-Surface Warfare |
| ASW | Anti-Submarine Warfare |
| AWACS | Airborne Warning and Control System |
| C2 | Command and Control |
| C4I | Command Control Communications Computers and Intelligence |
| C4ISR | Command Control Communications Computers Intelligence Surveillance Reconnaissance |
| CINC USF | Commander in Chief US Force Korea |
| CIWS | Close in Weapons System |
| CFC | Combined Forces Command |
| CNO | Chief of Naval Operations |
| CPIC | Coastal Patrol Interdiction Craft |

| | |
|---------|--|
| CTF-151 | Combined Task Force 151 |
| DAPA | Defense Acquisition Program Administration |
| DCS | Direct Commercial Sale |
| DMZ | Demilitarised Zone |
| DPRK | Democratic Peoples' Republic of Korea |
| EASI | East Asia Strategic Initiative |
| EBO | Effects Based Operations |
| EEZ | Exclusive Economic Zone |
| EW | Electronic Warfare |
| FIP | Force Improvement Program |
| FFX | Future Frigate Experimental |
| FMS | Foreign Military Sale |
| FTA | Free Trade Agreement |
| GCCS-M | Global Command and Control System-Maritime |
| IMET | International Military Training Program |
| JCS | Joint Chiefs of Staff |
| JMSDF | Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force |
| JSA | Joint Security Area |
| JVS | Joint Vision Study |
| KDX | Korea Destroyer Experimental |
| KIMS | Korea Institute For Maritime Strategy |
| KNCCS | Korean Naval Command and Control System |
| KNOC | Korea National Oil Corporation |
| KNTDS | Korea Naval Tactical Data link System |

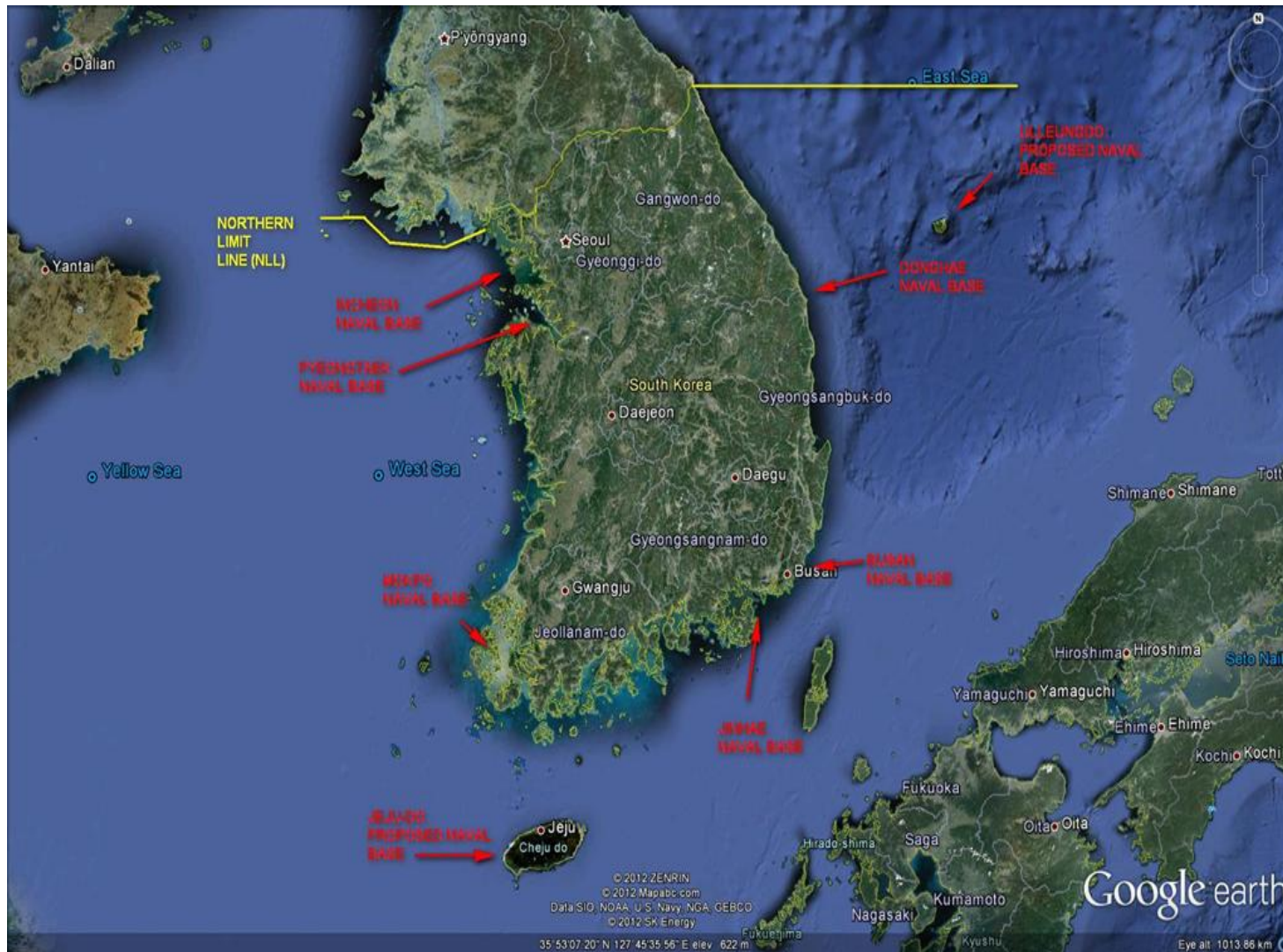
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| KPN | Korean People's Navy |
| KSS | Korea Submarine System |
| LCAC | Landing Craft Air Cushion |
| LCVP | Landing Craft Vehicle Personnel |
| LNG | Liquid National Gas |
| LPD | Landing Platform Dock |
| LPH | Landing Platform Helicopter |
| LSF | Landing Ship Fast |
| LSM | Landing Ship Medium |
| LST | Landing Ship Tank |
| MAP | Military Assistance Program |
| MASOC | Maritime Air Support Operations Centre |
| MBT | Main Battle Tank |
| MCBM | Maritime Confidence Building Measures |
| MINDEF | Minister of Defence |
| MND | Ministry of National Defense |
| MNF | Multi-National Force Operations |
| MPC | Maritime Patrol Craft |
| NCW | Network Centric Warfare |
| NDPO | National Defense Program Outline |
| NDRC | National Defense Reform Committee |
| NLL | Northern Limit Line |
| OPCOM | Operational Command |
| PACOM | Pacific Command |

| | |
|--------|---|
| PCC | Patrol Craft Corvette |
| PKG | Patrol Killer Guided-Missile |
| PKM | Patrol Killer Medium |
| PKO | Peacekeeping Operations |
| PKX | Patrol Killer Experimental |
| PLAAF | People's Liberation Army Air Force |
| PLAN | People's Liberation Army Navy |
| PRC | Peoples' Republic of China |
| PRT | Provincial Reconstruction Team |
| PSI | Proliferation Security Initiative |
| RAM | Rolling Airframe Missile |
| RIMPAC | Rim of the Pacific Exercise |
| RMA | Revolution in Military Affairs |
| ROC | Requirement of Operational Capabilities |
| ROK | Republic of Korea |
| ROKAF | Republic of Korea Air Force |
| ROKA | Republic of Korea Army |
| ROKMC | Republic of Korea Marine Corps |
| ROKN | Republic of Korea Navy |
| SAM | Surface to Air Missile |
| SAREX | Search and Rescue Exercise |
| SLOC | Sea Lines of Communication |
| SOF | Special Operations Forces |
| SSCS | Surface Ship Command System |

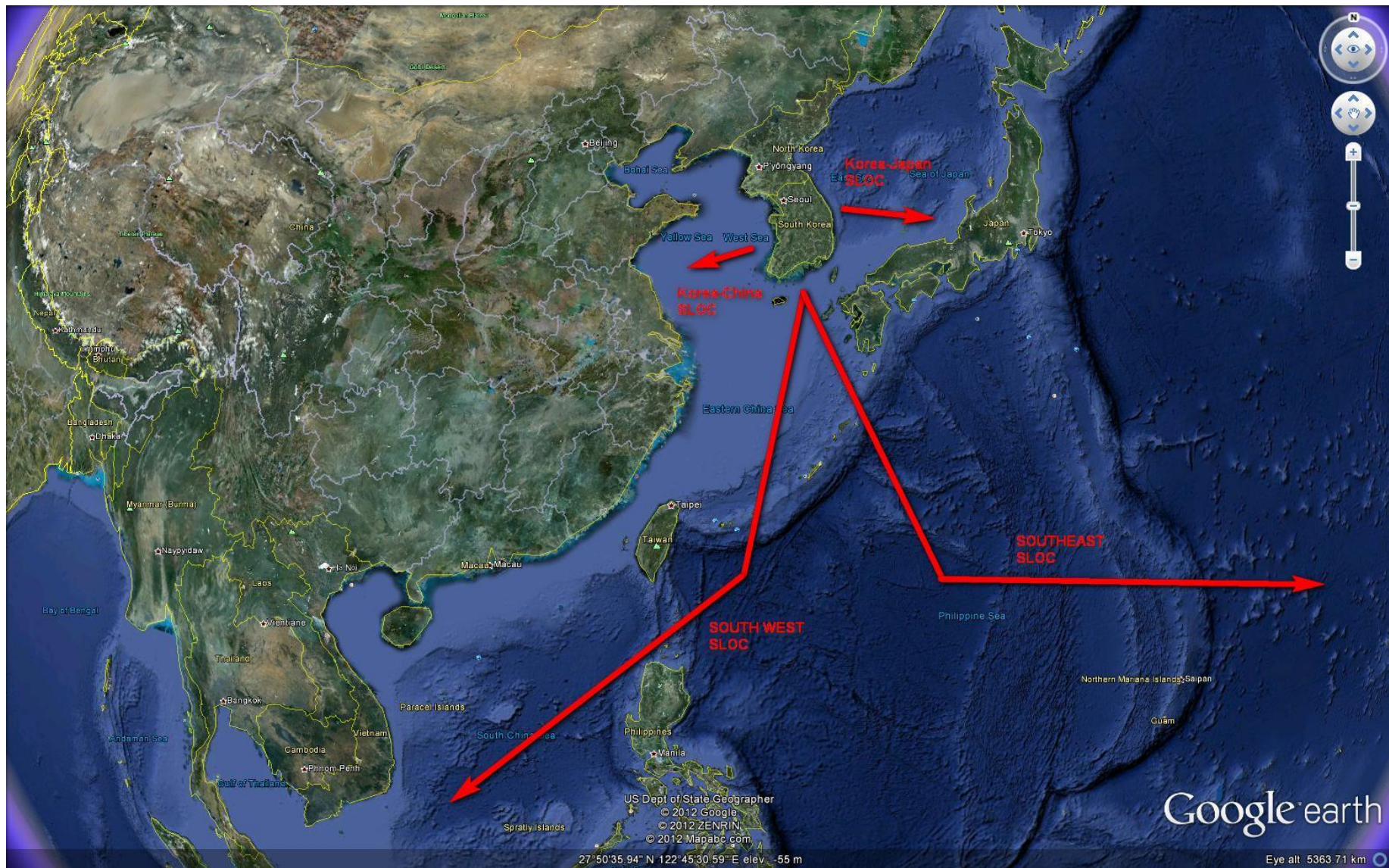
| | |
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| SSM | Surface to Surface Missile |
| UN | United Nations |
| UNC | United Nations Command |
| UNCLOS | United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea |
| UN MAC | United Nations Military Armistice Commission |
| UNPKO | United Nations Peacekeeping Operation |
| USFK | United States Forces Korea |
| VLS | Vertical Launch System |
| VSTOL | Very Short Takeoff & Landing |
| USFK | United States Forces Korea |
| USN | United States Navy |

MAPS

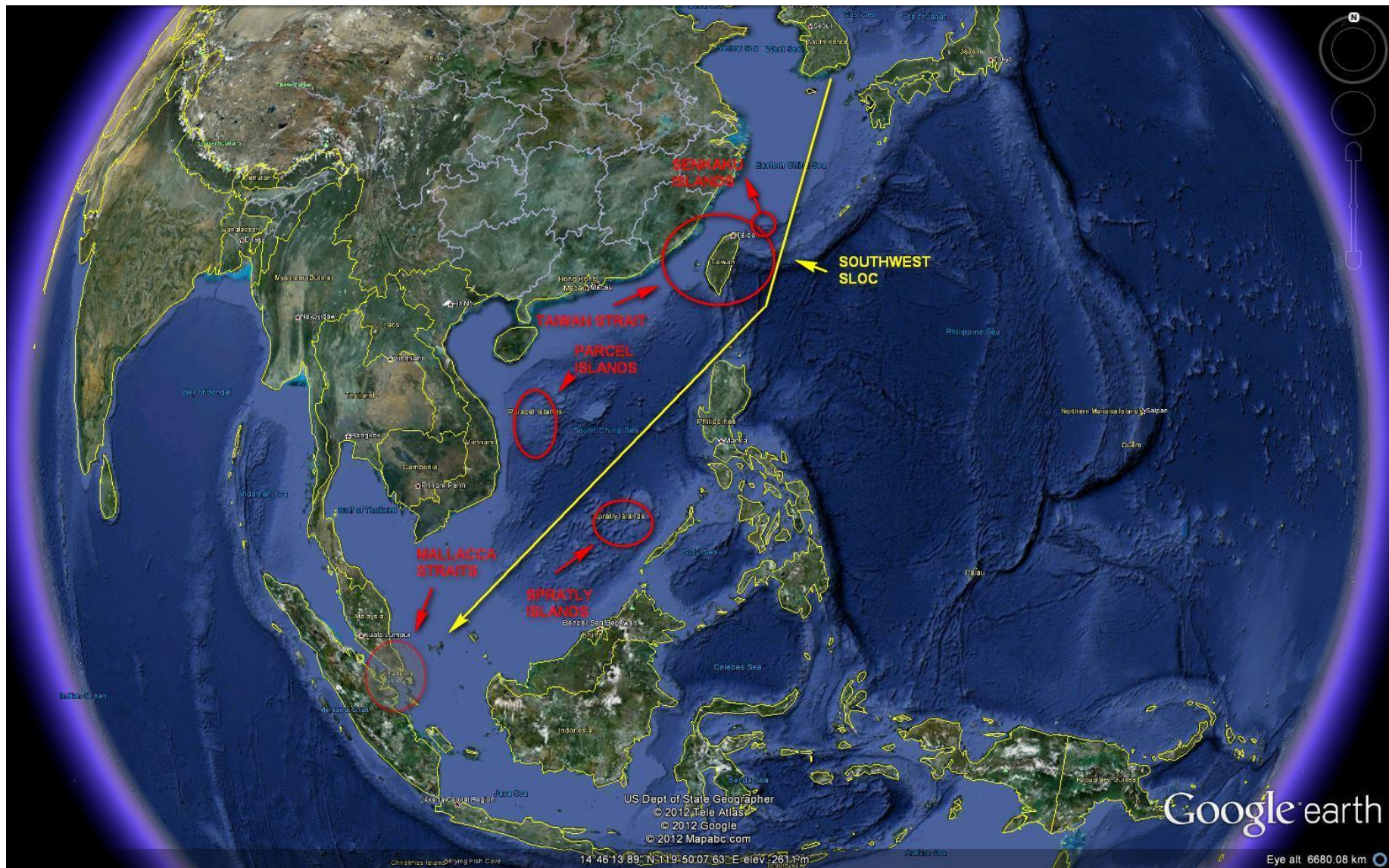
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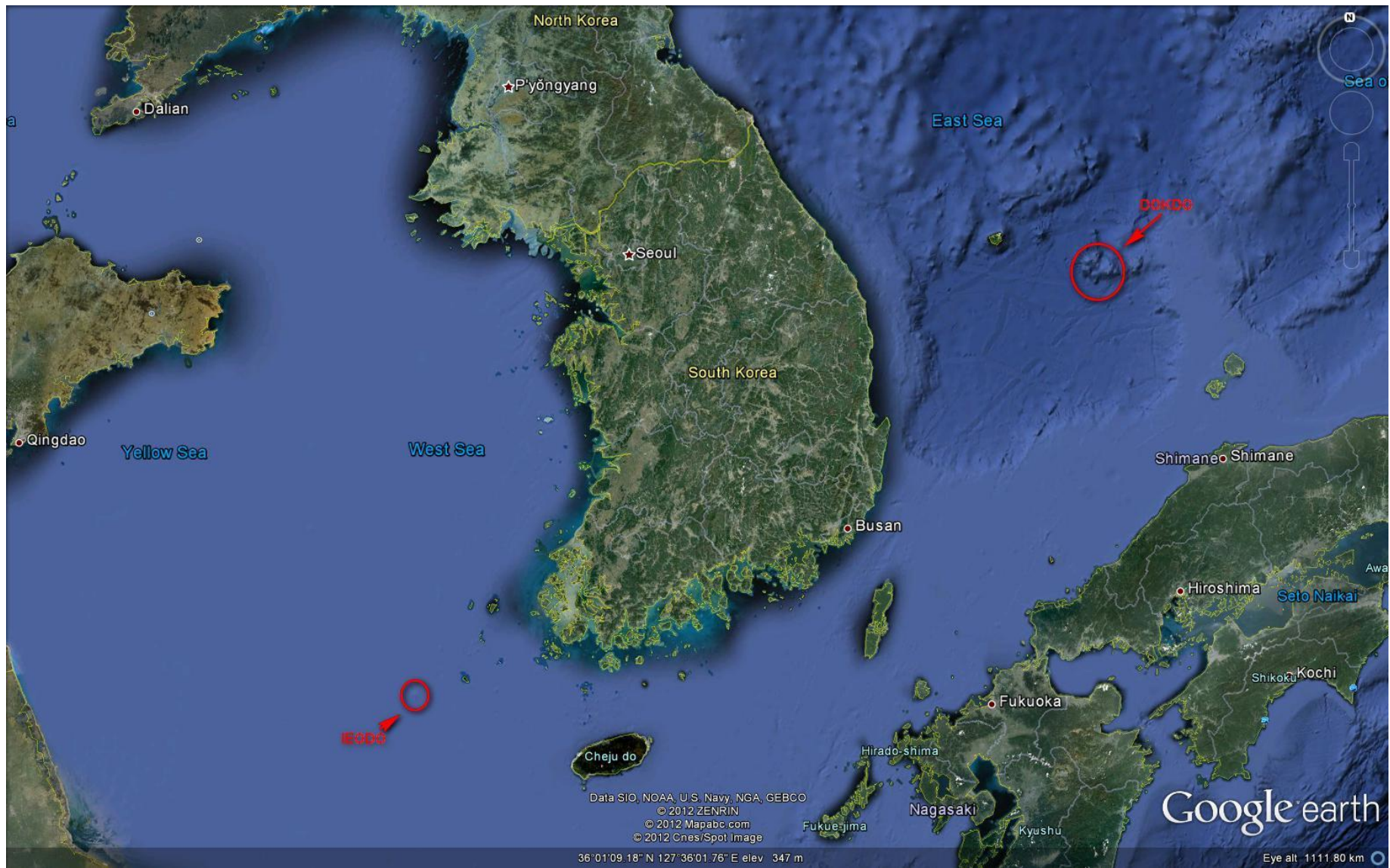
MAP 1: The NORTHERN LIMIT LINE AND ROKN NAVAL BASES



MAP 2: THE ROK's SLOC.



MAP 3: THE ROK's SLOC AND THREATS IN EAST ASIA.



MAP 4: DISPUTED REEFS AND ISLANDS AROUND THE ROK

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

I.I INTRODUCTION

This is a study of the Republic of Korea Navy (ROKN) and the nature of its transition from a technologically limited coastal force which was purely focused on the threat from the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (DPRK), to a modern naval power capable of performing limited regional operations with the goal of protecting the ROK's growing maritime, regional and to some extent global interests. To understand this phenomenon, this thesis, through the use of previously unused primary source material and interviews performs a multi-faceted analysis of the significant drivers, hindrances and influences on ROKN force modernisation. Initially, the ROK's interaction with the East Asian maritime environment will be examined, analysing the ROKN's perception of the threats it faces on sea, both traditional and non-traditional. What follows is a qualitative analysis of the exact nature of the ROKN's force modernisation program and its prospects for success and failure. It further traces the internal influences of naval modernisation through the lens of the ROK's relationship with the USA and the development of its own defence capability. Finally, the thesis looks at the changes in the political system and identity of the ROK and how the ROKN took advantage of them to drive their message of the need for a more powerful naval force. Throughout the thesis, the consequences of the 2010 sinking of the ROKNS *Cheonan* are

factored in to provide an analysis of the durability of the doctrinal shift toward regional operations. Ultimately this is a study of how an inward looking nation, which has had to cope with a critical border dispute, has begun to look outwards towards the sea which surrounds it and how the ROKN has attempted to fulfil the role of a naval force commensurate with a developed global trading nation.

Since the creation of the ROK following the end of WWII and the subsequent cementing of the peninsular divide at the end of the Korean War, the nation has undergone significant economic and political development. Moving from being one of the world's poorest nations to becoming one of the wealthiest in the short space of 40 years and transforming into a democracy after years of quasi-military rule the ROK has begun to play a greater role in the international community; A role that has been fuelled by its extensive economic network and which is reliant on the sea for its existence. Within this context the ROK has since the 1990s allowed its navy to develop toward a role that is focused on the traditional mission of deterring aggressive actions from the DPRK, but is also looking toward the new security threats that exist on the East Asian seas. As such, the thesis will address the following questions:

- How and why has the ROK's interaction with the sea changed and how has its perception of the maritime security environment influenced the modernisation of the ROKN?
- What is the true nature of ROKN modernisation in terms of the interaction between technological development, platform procurement and doctrinal change?
- What are the prospects for such naval modernisation to succeed in the goals set for it?

- What role has the U.S. played in ROKN modernisation, have they helped or hindered such development?
- What is the linkage between overall military modernisation, the defence industry and the ROKN?
- How has the ROKN attempted to create a naval identity and how successful have they been in changing the nature of the traditional ROK security consciousness?
- What is the relationship between democracy and the ROKN's modernisation program?

I.II BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In his address at the 49th Commencement Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy in 1995, President Kim, Young-sam called upon the newly graduated officers to become part of the ROK's new maritime era, through operating a modern fleet of warships on the five seas.^{1 2} This speech marked the beginning of a sustained period of naval transformation and signified the intentions of the President to alter the ROK's use of its sea power. Such intentions were a major change for a navy whose origins lay in the post Korean War mission of littoral operations and deterrence of the DPRK and for which blue water operations were outside its capabilities with the state forced to rely upon its ally the US for wider naval operations in a time of emergency. While the ROKN had undergone sustained modernisation in previous years what was fundamentally different in what Kim was calling for was the move toward a non-DPRK focused mission set. So what must be asked is what brought about

¹ Kim, Young-sam (1995). At the 49th Commencement Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy, 23 March 1995. Retrieved from www.pa.go.kr/online_contents/speech/speech02/1308100_4248.html

² This call was in line with the President's policy of *Segyehwa* or globalisation which was designed to force the ROK in to becoming part of the global community. See Chapter 7.

such an alteration in role and how successful has it been?

1) ASIAN OCEANS: NAVAL AND MARITIME GROWTH

Asia is a region defined by its maritime nature. The Indian Ocean running in to the South China Sea, which opens in to the East China Sea, West Sea and the East Sea means that geographically the ocean has a profound influence on Asian coastal countries.³ The presence of vital SLOC and strategic chokepoints that run throughout the region serve to emphasise the importance of the sea for the countries in the region.

Connecting the Indian Ocean to the South China Sea, the Malacca, Lombok and Sunda straits are the main conduits through which imports and exports are carried from the Middle East and Indian Ocean in to the South China Sea and the Pacific. The Malacca Strait, described as Asia's key maritime chokepoint, sees over 60,000 ships transit per year, carrying over half of the world's oil and a quarter of the world's traded goods.⁴ This vital corridor which is at one point only 1.5 nautical miles wide demonstrates not only the sheer volume of maritime traffic that flows into Asian waters but also the precarious nature of such a flow.⁵ ⁶ Further North the Tsugaru, Tsushima, La Perouse, Korea and Taiwan Straits all mark major maritime transit points, specifically for trade between Russia, the PRC, Taiwan, the ROK and Japan and access to the Pacific ocean.

³ In the ROK the Yellow Sea is known as the West Sea and the Sea of Japan is known as the East Sea. For this thesis the ROK version will be used.

⁴ Sawhney, Rajeev. (2006). *Redefining the Limits of the Straits: A Composite Malacca Straits Security System*. IDSS COMMENTARIES (37/2006)

⁵ Cole, B. D. (2001). *The Great Wall at Sea*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press. 8

⁶ For a detailed description of the use of each strait for shipping purposes and their legal status as regards ownership see: Guoxing, J. (2000). *Center Occasional Paper: SLOC Security in the Asia Pacific*. Honolulu: Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies.

Inside this maritime environment, the region has seen increasing interaction with the maritime sphere. Asian companies own a significant portion of the world's commercial fleet and the major economies of the Northeast Asia, the PRC, the ROK and Japan dominate the global shipbuilding industry. Alongside this is the increasing economic power of Asian states that rely on the sea both to transport their goods and to import vital raw materials and fuels to sustain increasingly demanding populations. These developments have resulted in the parallel growth of naval forces in the region. This dichotomy of increased reliance but increased tension is exacerbated by historical disputes, conflicting jurisdictional claims, boundary and territorial disputes. Significantly the types of acquisitions that are being made in Northeast Asia indicate a focus on long range platforms, force multipliers and expeditionary ships. This demonstrates a shift in strategy away from coastal protection to a more regional one, with a focus on dealing with any maritime conflict in the area, protecting resources and SLOC. This shift has occurred slowly under the influence of institutional, geopolitical and economic drivers.

Japan and their Maritime Self Defense Force (JMSDF) have followed a slow path towards modernisation. The JMSDF garnered its naval strategy from its unique position of having roots in the Imperial Navy, encouragement from the US and the advantage of having clearly defined missions during the cold war. This allowed it to create a role for itself within Japanese society and defence policy. Its focus on SLOC protection allowed it to create a strategic doctrine that, was not only operationally effective during the Cold War but, which laid the intellectual, cultural and industrial framework to continue to exist into the post war

era.⁷ This resulted in the JMSDF becoming, after the USN, the most advanced naval force in the Asia Pacific region both in terms of doctrine and platforms. The deployment of *Aegis* destroyers, helicopter carriers and the continued development of its submarine capability indicate that it is adjusting to new naval realities and is continuing to develop a balanced force within the geo-strategic environment it finds itself.⁸

The transformation of the PRC's Peoples Liberation Army Navy (PLAN), began in the late 1970's and was rooted in the move away from the continentalist/isolationist stance within the PRC leadership and the growth of an economic belt along the coast of the PRC.⁹ Concurrently the need for energy and the realisation of the importance of maritime resources became an added driver of naval transformation. Doctrinally, the PLAN strategy was developed by Gen. Liu Huaqing, it called for the gradual development of the PLAN from a coastal navy to one capable of controlling the seas around the PRC by 2000, the seas in East Asia by 2020 and becoming a global navy by 2050.¹⁰ Alongside this doctrinal development was an initial slow modernisation of naval platforms, however the development of ships and technology has increased at a rapid pace in the past 10 years and there is currently a significant drive to improve the surface, subsurface and air elements of the PLAN. This development is likely to continue as the PLAN strives for a blue water regional

⁷ For an analysis of JMSDF post war transformation see Wooley, P. J. (2000). *Japan's Navy: Politics and Paradox, 1971-2000*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers.

⁸ Patalano, A. (2008). Shielding the 'Hot Gates': Submarine Warfare and Japanese Naval Strategy in the Cold War and Beyond (1976-2006). *Journal of Strategic Studies*, 31 (6), 859-895. 891

⁹ Cheung, T. M. (1990). *Growth of Chinese Naval Power: Priorities, Goals, Missions and Regional Implications*. Singapore: Institute of Southeast Asian Studies. 6

¹⁰ For an in depth analysis of the PRC's naval doctrine see: Cole, B. D. (2001). *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy Enters the Twenty-First Century*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press. Chapter 8

force.¹¹

Such naval development has been replicated throughout East Asia and significantly in India also. It is either a deliberate process as Smith suggests is the case of the PLAN and by extension the JMSDF and others such as Singapore, or an evolutionary process, driven by financial ability and/or aspirational factors with little or no regard placed on operational abilities or requirements.¹² How the ROKN is positioned within this maritime regime is an important question and as this thesis will demonstrate, examining force modernisation of a specific country does not allow for generalisations as circumstances differ from state to state.

2) THE ROKN AND REFORM

While the PLAN may be a former littoral navy attempting to move into blue water operations, and the JMSDF has similarities with the ROKN in terms of political system and the U.S. Alliance, comparative similarities are often superficial and the challenges that each navy faces in modernisation, in carrying out missions and developmental direction means that it is extremely difficult to place a specific navy within a certain trend. While certainly in some aspects of its development the ROKN matches that of other navies, specifically in the area of platforms and weapons systems procured which are advanced in their nature and in-line with the PRC's or Japan's focus on attaining a broad spectrum of operational capabilities. The uniqueness of the ROKN is in its own security situation where it faces an unpredictable and severe threat from the DPRK and is part of a security alliance that may bear some similarities with Japan but has placed the ROK military under the command of a foreign power for over

¹¹ Yoshihara, Toshi. In Yoshihara, T., & Holmes, J. R. (Eds.). (2008). *Asia Looks Seaward Power and Maritime Strategy*. Westport: Praeger Security International. 6

¹² Smith, R. C. (2008). *Asian Military Modernization*. Sydney: Lowy Institute. 5-6

60 years. While India and its naval development could be classified as being similar to that of the ROK given its traditional focus on the land and the security threats across its borders, the reality is that India's greater size, economic power and ambition do not serve as a good comparison with the ROK. The cultural and political aspects of naval modernisation are also unique for the ROKN as they are for any state given the variety of internal factors that influence naval procurement. The ROK is unique, its geo-strategic status, its development and the recognition of a multitude of security challenges all provide a set of circumstances that raise the important issues for why a power with such a potent land threat has looked to develop its naval forces.

A geostrategic island, but one that has had a traditionally inward focus as a result of a historical ignorance of the sea exacerbated by the continuing issue of the DPRK's land threat and the possibility of unifying a divided people, it is easy to understand why the ROKN has had a limited focus. Traditionally, its role was one of subservience to the ROKA and it was designed to support a land force strategy of deterrence in peacetime, while at war it was tasked with holding the line until the USN arrived. Arising from this the ROKN underwent modernisation, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s but this was understandably within the context of the threat posed from the North. Thus procurement and doctrine was designed with matching and then defeating the DPRK in any emergency that would arrive.

This background sets the context for what has occurred since 1995. An analysis of the procurement decisions shows that the modernisation and replacement phase demonstrates a continued focus on the DPRK with the introduction of a new class of guided missile patrol

boat and the gradual decommissioning of existing platforms. In addition there has been a steady upgrade in the fleet's submarine capability with the launching of 3 AIP capable boats and planned launch of 6 more plus a replacement for the fleet's frigate force is currently under construction. Added to these existing capability upgrades, what is most apparent is the construction of new capability ships. The commissioning of three KDX III *Aegis* destroyers and six KDX-II destroyers all with significant surface, air and sub-surface combat capability signals a potential shift in the operational direction of the ROKN and a significant upgrade in the ROKN's capability. In addition the launch of the LPD *Dokdo* the first of a possible three in her class demonstrates in part the ROKN's commitment to regional operations while providing the ROKN with a degree of power projection capability although the failure to continue production of this vessel raises important questions regarding the durability of regional focused naval development and the ROKN's ability to sustain multiple procurement paths. The significance and intention of this new capability can be seen in development of a Strategic Mobile Flotilla capable of rapid forward deployment. Added to this is the construction of a new naval base on Jeju Island which would for allow easier access to the potential trouble spots both around the peninsula and in the region.¹³

With the creation of this blue water capable force the assertion has been made that the ROKN has turned away from its traditional role of deterring DPRK aggression, but as has been pointed out the ROKN has continued to develop its forces to combat any action undertaken by the DPRK. Currently the Korean People's Navy (KPN) is a coastal force with little or no operational capability beyond the littoral waters of the peninsula. The major

¹³ Navy activates 1st Strategic Mobile Fleet. Korea Times 12/02/2010. Retrieved from www.koreatimes.co.kr (12/02/2010).

operational focus of the ROKN in regards to the DPRK has traditionally been to prevent incursions over the Northern Limit Line (NLL) to stop the insertion of SOF by midget submarine and to deter any aggressive moves by the KPN toward the ROK.¹⁴ There have been four major clashes along the NLL all of which have ended in significant losses for the DPRK alongside which there have been repeated violations by both DPRK fishing and naval vessels. In 2010 the corvette, ROKNS *Cheonan* was sunk in the West Sea by a DPRK submarine, significantly raising tensions in the peninsula and forcing the ROKN to reevaluate the threat the DPRK's naval forces posed, especially its submarine fleet and its own capabilities to counter them. It alongside the shelling of Yeonpyeong-do heightened the importance of security along the NLL and forced the ROKN into reassessing its operational priorities.

While the ROKN reached qualitative superiority over its northern rival some time before the 1990s, the current phase of modernisation was always conducted with the DPRK partly in mind. The development of modern combat vessels with a multitude of capabilities, now allow the ROKN to perform a more advanced role against the DPRK, including power projection, strike and anti-air operations. Additionally, many of the improvements such as the development of an LPD and *Aegis* destroyers were made in part to counter the quantitative superiority of the KPN, particularly in high speed amphibious craft, which could without airpower and effective command and control overwhelm ROKN forces through sheer numbers.

¹⁴ The Northern Limit Line is a maritime boundary designed to keep the ROK and DPRK fishing fleets apart. It is not recognised by the DPRK as a legal boundary. See Kotch, J. B., & Abbey, M. (2003). Ending Naval Clashes on the Northern Limit Line and the Quest for a West Sea Peace Regime. *Asian Perspective*, 27 (2), 175-204

Thus the naval threat of the DPRK as a driver for a modernised navy is a significant part of the puzzle, but to examine it completely, an appraisal of Asian naval transformation in general is necessary. This began after the end of the cold war when the established geopolitical order collapsed and concurrently a number of Asian countries developed economies became capable of supporting such transformation. The focus has been on advanced capability submarines and power projection capability, namely aircraft carriers, large troop carrying ships, high-technology frigates and destroyers. This build up can be attributed to the geography of the region, the need to protect SLOC and EEZ and the risk of territorial conflict.¹⁵

The question arises about the level of instability this build-up has introduced into the region. The stability of the maritime order is currently secured by the USN; however the projected rise of the PLAN and the PRC's apparent desire to increase its influence in the region could present an unwanted challenge to this stability. This argument is sustained by the definition of offensive versus defensive transformation as argued by McDevitt who states that the majority of the modernisation in the region is of a defensive nature and thus not destabilising vis-à-vis ROKN modernisation while the PRC's arms programs are of an offensive nature and thus could present a challenge to the United States and thus the region.¹⁶ However there is a counter argument that all naval build-ups have the potential to be destabilising because they alter the nature of any maritime confrontation, as argued by Lee.¹⁷

¹⁵ Lee, S.-H. (2009). *Naval Buildups in East Asia: Trends & Implications, IFANS Briefs 2009-26*. Seoul: Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security.

¹⁶ McDevitt, M. Asian Military Modernization: Key Areas of Concern. *Adelphi Series*, 48 (400). 125-132

¹⁷ Lee, S.-H. (2009).

This is an issue of perception and rivalry where what is potentially destabilising for one country is not for another given force comparisons, security perceptions and historical memory. For the ROK the view of such developments both in the context of the PRC and Japan is one of potential destabilisation given their historical relationship with the surrounding powers and the ROK has acknowledged that it is necessary to maintain a level of naval power within the region to 'keep up with ones neighbours' in case the eventuality arises that naval modernisation or geo-political manoeuvring destabilises the region or threatens the country. The ROKN cannot compete in terms of manpower and material with the three main naval powers in the region, the US, Japan and the PRC, thus it is logical to assume that they need a force capable of deterring or matching a threat rather than presenting one. The focus of the ROKN on many of the issues raised above is indicated in their increased emphasis on SLOC security especially on the energy supply routes running from the Middle East, through the Indian Ocean and into the South China Sea.

With the transformation of the ROK's economy in the 1960's from an agrarian to an industrial/export base the country gained economic autonomy from the United States and during a period of massive growth from the 1960's through to the present day (interrupted by the 1997 Asian financial crash) it became one of the world's most powerful economies. One of the consequences of this growth is an increased dependency on energy and thus on energy imports as the ROK has virtually no indigenous energy resources.¹⁸ Such dependency on external supplies of energy combined with issues such as the tanker wars on the 1980's focused the ROK's attention on SLOC security. What changed in the late 1990's was the ROK

¹⁸ For an analysis of the ROK's energy insecurities see Calder, K. E. (2005). *Korea's Energy Insecurities Comparative and Regional Perspectives : Special Studies Series 3*. Washington, D.C.: Korea Economic Institute.

government's desire to create a force capable of protecting SLOC not just in its near-seas but also on a regional if not global level, as seen in the deployment of ROK naval forces to the coast of Somalia to protect Korean shipping in that area. Thus SLOC security has become a major driver in ROKN transformation, but linked to this is the reduced reliance on the United States which had previously fulfilled this role. This move towards independent operational capability is driven not by a fear of a fluctuating U.S. commitment to the region but the need to protect ROK shipping independent of U.S. interests, for example a clash or increased tension between the PRC, the U.S. or Japan would place the ROK in a difficult position and would potentially require an independent naval capability to escort vital shipping through maritime hot spots. Thus the ROK is looking to create a force that would represent its own interests and is commensurate with an independent, responsible middle power. Thus shifting national identity and a growing naval identity is an important part of understanding the reasoning behind ROK naval reform.

The linkage between identity building and the ROK-US alliance is also a significant factor in explaining the development of the ROKN. The powerful influence of the US on ROK security following the end of the Korean War encompassed dominion over the ROK's military procurement, its finances and ultimately the military itself, however beginning in the 1970's the ROK began to regain control over certain aspects of its armed forces. The *Yulgok* program which was initiated in 1974 was a force modernisation effort focused on building a self-reliant defence capacity which was not so heavily influenced by the US. Through the build up of its armed forces and the development of an indigenous defence industry the ROK began a slow journey of gradual independence from the US. While still not complete, the

economic strength of the ROK has allowed it to build an industrial basis for the development of its own weapons and the purchase of non-US systems when required. While still reliant on the US, in many aspects in terms of weaponry and the provision of vital capabilities the ROK has now developed a degree of independence.

This combined with its increasing economic power, has led the alliance to a new stage where mutual interest is becoming central and the ROK is no longer just a receiver of aid but is an almost equal partner in the alliance. This does not mean that the ROK is no longer reliant on or influenced by Washington, for example wartime operational command (OPCON) is still in the hands of the US (due to be handed back in 2015). What it does indicate is that the ROK's identity has changed from a country ravaged by war in 1953 to one which has developed rapidly becoming a member of the G20 in 1999 and having some of the world's most advanced infrastructure. For the ROKN this alteration in the country's perception of itself mirrored its own development, from being heavily influenced by the US which for so long had controlled the direction of its operations, it has moved to being an example of ROK technical prowess and a symbol of the ROK's increasing independent defence capability.

This change in national identity and a growing regional and global interest does not alone however explain why the ROKN underwent such modernisation and moved toward a regional capability. The ROK has not traditionally had a maritime identity and although its national identity has begun to change it does not automatically mean that it would look toward the sea. The ROKN acknowledges this problem and has made considerable efforts to persuade both the political class and the public of the need for a greater naval capability and

through the utilisation of the ROK's own history, lectures and conferences the navy has attempted to create a ROK maritime identity. The reality of the DPRK threat creates difficulties in this, as was shown after the sinking of the *Cheonan* where the ROKN was criticised and modernisation within a regional rather than littoral context was questioned by both government elites and the general public. The durability of the ROKN's message is a significant issue in its future development and its importance rests in its ability to affect the decision makers in Seoul.

The political direction of the ROKN and the beliefs of each administration are central to understanding how and why the ROKN began to develop in the 1990s. In what is an imperial style presidency, the policies of the President have had a large impact on ROKN reform. It is vital to note that prior to 1993, the ROK was a quasi-military dictatorship with nearly all of its leaders both elected and un-elected being members of the ROKA. This is an important point as the ROKA in conjunction with the US defined Seoul's security policy; that of focusing on the army and the land threat from the ROK. The election of Kim, Young-sam in 1993 changed this direction and latterly under his successors the security of the policy of the ROK moved from one of state defence to a broader national security policy. Where non-traditional threats and the post-cold war environment were taken into account, this greatly assisted the ROKN in its regional ambitions as such a move matched the security ambitions of successive presidents, whose support was vital for such a long term project.

This support's centrality in deciding the fate of the ROKN can be seen in the tenure of Lee, Myung-bak, who looked to realign the ROK forces back toward the DPRK. This resulted in

more financial support for the ROKA and the reduction in procurement for the ROKN. The sinking of the *Cheonan* reinforced this policy and while naval construction began again in earnest, this was on vessels designed for littoral combat. Thus it can be seen that the modernisation continues but the lack of political support has shifted the focus away from the regional and in order for the ROKN to regain the initiative it will need to re-establish the support of future ROK political leaders.

I.III TERMINOLOGY

Any analysis of naval modernisation requires a contextualisation of the terminology used. This is especially true in the case of the ROKN, where terms such as blue water or ocean going navy are used interchangeably by the organisation itself but are not often assigned a specific meaning by analysts and conjure images of a U.S. style fleet with a permanent global presence. This raises the question does blue water/ocean going navy indicate an extension of geographic reach or is it an expression of capabilities. For the ROK a definition of blue water/ocean going as understood by the JCS is one based on capabilities defining it as the ability to:

'Deliver operations for an extended period in the ocean...possessing an optimum level of sea control, maritime transport protection and force projection capability. The ROK Navy should have three dimensional force such as surface, underwater and air to support national policy and defend national interests in the ocean'.¹⁹

¹⁹ Definition from ROK Joint Chiefs of Staff Website. Retrieved from http://jcs.mil.kr/views/jsp/dictionary/dic_korean.jsp?page=1&part=1&searchcbo=word&search=%C7%D8%B1%BA

This suggests a broad definition in terms of geography and capabilities but provides a clue into ROKN thinking in that blue water/ocean going is something new and separate from the operations they had before i.e. those focused on the DPRK. It is more than an expression of a desire to operate on a geographically wider basis but is rather a signifier of an overall increase in capabilities and a new direction for the ROKN.

This generality especially in the lack of definition of ocean or blue water means that for the analyst it is difficult to separate the ROKN's operations and force structure using traditional geographic operational terms. Deterrence and what could be defined as traditional missions around the peninsula certainly occur in the littoral despite the many problems that arise from this term. Broadly the ROKN define these as operations either in ROK territorial waters or operations against the DPRK. Indeed one document refers to the ROKN as a coastal navy. The varying definitions of littoral operations do allow for ambiguity given that in taking Vego's definition '*In military terms the extent of the "littoral" depends on one's ability to project power effectively from shore into the enemies interior*' the extent of the littoral is defined by capabilities of the navy's operating near to shore, while Friedman implies that littoral operations could include areas up to the extent of a 200nm EEZ.^{20 21} For this author littoral operations fall within the British Maritime Doctrine's relatively open definition of '*Coastal sea areas and that portion of the land which is susceptible to influence or support from the sea*' and are specifically related to capabilities developed and areas dedicated to combating the DPRK.²²

²⁰ Vego, M. (2003). *Naval Strategy and Operations in Narrow Seas*. Cass: Oxon. 7

²¹ Friedman, N (2001). *Seapower as Strategy Navies and National Interests*. Naval Institute Press: Maryland.

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²² MOD (UK) (2004). *British Maritime Doctrine. BR 1806 3rd ed*. The Stationary Office: London. 27

By extension regional operations are again more than a geographic definition for the ROKN being focused not only on operations extending to the Malacca straits but also capabilities procured with regional neighbours such as Japan and the PRC in mind. Again this is a broad definition and is prone to alteration depending on the document indicating a lack of clarity on this issue. However, there is a preference across ROKN literature to define their operational extent using its territorial waters, its EEZ and then out towards the regional and then the global.²³ Indeed the same document describes the ROKN's development goal as the ability to perform operations '*anywhere in the world*'.²⁴ A further document defines its future operational goal as ranging from 1000 miles from the peninsula to 2800 miles (approximately the Straits of Malacca) and up to 5000 miles if necessary.²⁵ These are extremely broad definitions of important issues. For the author regional operations are ones that are focused on the threats surrounding the ROK both in the waters around the peninsula i.e. the ROK's EEZ and the operational area of Southeast Asia down to the Malacca straits. It is not clear how for example the Indian Ocean is defined by the ROKN but for this author it and all other operational areas are considered as global in their nature.

Thus while such definitions are relatively unclear on the part of the ROKN, what they have is an open definition of operational capabilities and perhaps a distinct understanding between operations that they have conducted traditionally and ones that are included in the development program in question. Over the course of the thesis and especially in Chapter 4, the author will assess if current and future force structure has broadly matched the definitions set out above for a blue water navy and if it is defined by this relatively loose

²³ ROKN Headquarters (2008). *Navy Vision 2030* <해군비전 2030>. Gyeryong-dae. ROKN Headquarters. 18

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ ROKN Headquarters (1999). *Navy Vision 2020* <해군비전 2020>. Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 97

geographic distinction of operational areas and priorities.

I.IV STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

The methodology of analysing a navy's priorities is extremely difficult due to the complexity and breadth of naval operations and the influence of internal and external factors on their decision making and operational thinking. Assessing such priorities for the ROKN is made even more difficult by the relative lack of publically available material and the inconsistency of the material that has been released. Additionally a division needs to be made between current and future priorities as platforms possessed and structures used could be changed to reflect altered operational demands. Thus to assess such matters one needs to first examine what a navy has stated about their operational past, present and future, this then needs to be compared with the complex mix of platforms, technologies and systems that have been deployed with the goal of determining what such items bring to the organisation in terms of tactical and strategic capabilities. The deployment of such capabilities in terms of organisational structure often provides the best clues in to what a navy views as its operational priorities and can be to some extent confirmed through an analysis of training programs and operations. Given these factors this thesis in demonstrating what the ROKN is attempting to achieve in terms of platforms and force structure examines not only the external drivers of threat perception but also how such perceptions have influenced stated missions and procurement. It is only through this comprehensive approach does a picture of the ROKN's priorities both current and future emerge.

This thesis is divided into 8 further chapters, describing the factors which have influenced ROKN modernisation. Chapter 2 is a literature review which provides a background to East Asian naval modernisation and the varying factors; political, economic and security that play a role in the ROK military and its reform. It lays out the disparate nature of the literature and the relative lack of analysis that has been performed on the ROKN and its transformation.

Chapter 3 addresses the East Asian maritime environment and how the ROK views this through the lens of its own security. It traces the growing importance of the sea in East Asia and how the ROK's threat perception has altered, concurrent with its own maritime interests both in the littoral and the regional.

The ROKN's force modernisation, organisational structure and mission set are examined in Chapter 4. It describes how its modernisation programs are aimed at both regional and littoral operations. In examining the realities of such diversity; it looks at the difficulties the ROKN faces in trying to fulfil both missions and how it is attempting to overcome them. Ultimately this chapter informs the remainder of the thesis of the true nature and goals of ROKN reform.

Chapter 5 looks at the US-ROK alliance and how the relationship between these two countries has influenced the ROKN. It demonstrates how the US has played a primary and secondary role in ROKN development since the Korean War, both through initial direct control over the ROK defence establishment to the development of an independent ROK defence capability. Finally it assesses recent developments in the alliance and the impact on

the navy of the move toward a less one-sided and more cooperative relationship.

The attempts of the ROKN to create a naval identity are assessed in Chapter 6. It will assess both the public and political sides of ROKN identity building; the methods used, the difficulties faced and the successes and failures of such an effort.

Chapter 7 will address the politics of naval reform. It will look at the impact of democratic reforms and how they changed the power structure within the ROK. It will then trace the policies of successive Presidents examining how they have promoted the globalisation of the ROK and how through this, ROKN reform has progressed. It will also assess how vulnerable the ROKN is to political change and the alteration of security and foreign policies.

Finally, Chapter 8 will conclude the thesis by bringing together the elements examined in the previous chapters to provide an assessment of ROKN modernisation.

NOTES

A NOTE ON SOURCES

Obtaining information about ROK defence matters is particularly difficult due to the sensitive nature of the topic in the ROK and strict classification laws. Fortunately, this situation has improved somewhat of late and access to some policy documents is now possible. However, at all times information related to operational capabilities, doctrine and motivations is strictly controlled. This author has obtained through the assistance of naval officers in the ROK some previously restricted documentation. Also by undertaking archival research in Seoul the author has found primary sources that were previously unavailable. Additionally, as is befitting one of the most connected countries in the world, much information is now available online. Any documents that are in Korean will have the title written in English and then in Korean script. The author has also conducted on the record interviews with retired senior naval officers and a senior politician; these will be listed in the footnotes.

A NOTE ON LANGUAGE

With the exception of footnotes and the bibliography no Korean script will be used in this thesis. Translations of words directly from Korean such as proper nouns are, where possible performed using the official 'Revised Romanization of Korean'. However older sources, pre 2000 used a different system; the 'McCune-Reischauer Script'. As a result some proper nouns will be written utilising this method, especially if they pre-date 2000 and have not

been officially altered. All translation was conducted by the author and checked by a native Korean speaker when necessary. All interviews were conducted in English

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

II.I INTRODUCTION

An analysis of the literature surrounding the ROKN reveals a dearth of published works in either Korean or English. While in the ROK the number has increased periodically especially in the 1990's when the naval community was pushing for naval development and following the sinking of the *Cheonan*, only recently have any significant contributions been made in English. As a result the literature reviewed provides an analysis of the limited number of works available in English specifically on the ROKN and then moves towards examining some of the wider debates regarding naval development in Northeast Asia. While including the ROKN within these works, authors have generally sidelined them in favour of the larger navies in the region specifically the PRC, the JMSDF and the USN. This is primarily due to the topicality of the subject and the lesser role the ROKN plays within the region's security architecture. Secondly while the ROK is a topic of some discussion, this primarily surrounds the nuclear issue on the peninsula and ROK relations with the DPRK and sometimes its regional neighbours and alliance partner the US. As a result recent literature has rarely focused solely on the ROKN with the majority works looking at ROK defence as a single entity with the larger service the ROKA and the presence of US forces on the peninsula dominating the discourse.

In order to examine the literature on the drivers of ROKN reform some topics will be excluded from this study. Firstly I will not include the Republic of Korea Marine Corp (ROKMC) as a field of study, while technically they are part of the ROKN they are effectively a distinct service and thus have little or no bearing on the thesis topic. Also I will not perform a deep analysis of the ROK's relationships military or political with its geographical neighbours or allies, this will only be done in so much as it relates to the field of research. Despite being one of the main themes in the literature regarding Asia's navies, particularly in the early part of this century the arguments surrounding maritime confidence building measures (MCBM) and a co-operative maritime security environment are not relevant to the questions asked in this thesis and as such will be not be part of the literature reviewed in this paper.¹

This review will be divided into three sections. The first will look at literature that deals specifically with the development of the ROKN. The second section will examine the works that covers wider Asian naval modernisation, both in general and specifically dealing with the PLAN and the JMSDF. This literature provides for the reader a basis for comparison between the research questions and what is occurring with the navies that are culturally and geographically closest to it. The final area that is examined are works that examine specific issues surrounding ROKN development with the caveat that the majority of these works are focused on the much wider themes of overall ROK defence reform, internal politics and the ROK defence industry.

¹ For an analysis of MCBMs and the Asia-Pacific see Kim, D.-K. (2000). *Naval Strategy in Northeast Asia Geo-strategic Goals, Policies and Prospects*. London: Frank Cass.

II.II THE ROKN AND RECENT LITERATURE

The first significant work on the ROKN in English was done by Commander Cho, Young-joo a serving naval officer who, in an unpublished doctoral thesis (University of Hull), developed a comprehensive historical survey of the ROKN from its creation to the modern period. Chronologically constructed this thesis provides a good background on the realities of ROKN history, detailing in some length the difficulties the ROKN faced in its development and how these were overcome.² In dealing with the modern period, Cho provides a detailed if short assessment of the move toward regional operations and concludes with some of the force planning debates that were extant at the time. While extremely useful as a guide to the history of the service, Cho does not examine in great detail, as the nature of the thesis does not allow for it, the development of the modern ROKN in a thematic fashion. The broad scope of his research question reduces the overall examination of how the ROKN has developed and why the mission set changed in significant depth. A second unpublished doctoral thesis (University of Salford) written in 2009 by Park, Seong-yeong titled '*The development of the Republic of Korea Navy in a Changing National Defence and Northeast Asian Security Environment*' undertakes a thematic approach to the modernisation of the ROKN.^{3 4} His work provides a great deal of context, examining the ROK's security environment and that of Northeast Asia. He also examines the Northeast Asian maritime

² Cdr. Cho, Y-J (2003). *The Naval Policy of the Republic of Korea: From the Beginnings to the Twenty-First Century*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: University of Hull.

³ See: Park, S-Y (2009). *The development of the Republic of Korea Navy in a Changing National Defence and Northeast Asian Security Environment*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: University of Salford.

⁴ This thesis was later adapted into a chapter in Till, G. & P. Bratton (Ed.) (2011). *Sea Power and the Asia-Pacific: The Triumph of Neptune?* London: Routledge. This chapter titled Sea Power and the Navy of the Republic of Korea (pp.144-166) provides a comprehensive if standard appreciation of the ROKN and its place in the ROK's security architecture.

environment, using these contextualising chapters to define the drivers for ROKN modernisation on which two chapters of the work are dedicated. He provides a degree of detail on the internal developments that have allowed for ROKN modernisation, but the majority of his work is focused on external drivers. While certainly comprehensive in its analysis of the East Asian maritime environment, the structure used and the context of the research question do not allow for significant direct examination of the ROKN in terms of its views of its operational environment, future and current roles and the political implications of a wider naval mission set.

Two more recent works on ROKN modernisation have been published since 2010. Both by retired naval officers; Admiral Koda of the JMSDF and Michael McDevitt of the USN, these works albeit word limited provide good insight into ROKN modernisation from two different perspectives. Adm. Koda writing in the *Naval War College Review* provides an account of the ROKN force modernisation from a force level perspective. Giving little in the way of political or strategic context, he limits himself to an analysis of force development and his perception of the ROKN's current and possible future strengths and weaknesses.⁵ The most recent work is by McDevitt, published in 2012 his chapter is part of a book edited by Scott Snyder on the future of the US-ROK alliance.⁶ The context of the book provides a degree of perspective in to the angle that McDevitt has used, with part of his work dedicated to the potential areas of greater USN-ROKN cooperation. However, this chapter is probably the best of the published works in explaining the drivers of ROKN modernisation but does not (most likely due to a limit on length) provide a detailed account of the essential internal

⁵ See: Adm. Koda, Y. (2010). *The Emerging Republic of Korea Navy*. *Naval War College Review*, 63.2, (pp. 13-32).

⁶ See: McDevitt, M. (2012). *The Maritime Relationship*. In Snyder, S. *The US-South Korea Alliance Meeting New Security Challenges*, (pp.21-43). London: Lynne Rienner.

determinates of ROKN modernisation and the successes and failures of said development. Taken together these two works provide useful guidance into some of the elements of the modern ROKN, but leave substantial gaps in detail in to why and how the ROKN has taken the course it has since the early 1990s.

II.III NAVAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE NORTHEAST ASIAN REGION

While these four works comprise the majority of recent texts on the ROKN there is also a considerable amount of literature on naval transformation within the Asia-Pacific region, which although not directly related to the ROKN and ROK security does provide a contextual and thematic basis. These works can be divided into two areas; first, general analyses that focus on thematic reasons for the increased level of naval spending and the overall nature of naval transformation in the Asia-Pacific region and second, literature that addresses specific navies within the region. The latter assists in providing the context with which to examine ROKN transformation.

The Northeast Asia region has seen unprecedented growth in naval power over the last twenty years. The PRC, Japan, Taiwan, the ROK and India have all increased their naval capacity and plans are extant to increase it further in to the future.⁷ The reasons behind this growth are most succinctly put by Kim and Lee, who provide a common list of themes namely: 1) the impression of a US drawdown in the region, 2) territorial disputes, 3) a fear of Japanese/PRC resurgence and competition, 4) SLOC and EEZ protection, 5) economic factors

⁷ Yoshihara, T. & J.R. Holmes (Eds.). (2008). *Asia Looks Seaward Power and Maritime Strategy*. Westport: Praeger Security International. 4-6

and national prestige and 6) weapons supply side pressures. Lee ultimately states that naval build-ups are indicative of the instability in the region's maritime environment.⁸ Comparing these arguments above with Ball one can see that the literature covering the naval build-up in Asia can also be linked to the overall arms build-up in the region. He argues that economic growth, self reliance, the reduction of the US presence in the region and the fear of regional power domination have driven arms increases throughout the region.⁹ Indeed in 1994 Ball himself used many of these arguments to describe the factors driving naval modernisation in the region.¹⁰

One of the most frequently held arguments regarding naval development in Asia focuses on the relationship between it and the region's economics. The theory is that the massive growth in Asian-Pacific economies has a direct link to the arms build-up, specifically in the maritime arena. Calder, Matthews and Kasper all attribute the economy as being a central linking factor in the development of naval power in the Asia-Pacific. The suggestion is that economic growth and defense are linked and that without economic growth, money cannot be diverted to arms expenditure and inversely a strong defensive capability is necessary for strong economic growth.^{11 12} Indeed Calder creates a strong linkage between economic growth, the consequential need for energy and the resulting geo-strategic insecurity leading

⁸ See: Lee, S.-H. (2009). *Naval Buildups in East Asia: Trends & Implications, IFANS Briefs 2009-26*. Seoul: Institute of Foreign Affairs and National Security. & Kim, Duk-ki (2000) *Naval Strategy in Northeast Asia Geo-strategic Goals, Policies and Prospects*. London: Cass.

⁹ Ball, D. (1996). *Arms and Affluence: Military Acquisitions in the Asia Pacific Region*. In M. E. Brown, S. M. Lynn-Jones, & S. E. Miller (Eds.), *East Asian Security: An International Security Reader* (pp. 76-110). Cambridge: MIT Press.

¹⁰ Ball, D. (1994). *The Post Cold War Maritime Strategic Environment in East Asia*. In T. Sherwood (Ed.), *Maritime Power in the China Seas*. Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre.

¹¹ Kasper, W. (1993). *The Implications of Economic Development for Naval Power in the Pacific*. In Smith, H & Bergin, A. *Naval Power in the Pacific: Toward the Year 2000*. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers. 16

¹² Mathews, R. (2009). *Defence and the Economy an Introduction*. In Till, G. et al. *Globalization and Defence in the Asia Pacific*. Oxon: Routledge.

to an arms build up in the naval sphere.¹³ These arguments certainly merit consideration, especially regarding the linkage between the economy, energy necessity and the protection of SLOCs, but as all the above authors mention, there are other factors at play. It is these factors and their relationship with the economic argument which are essential to examine in terms of the question of the thesis. Certainly the rapid growth of the ROK economy can be chronologically linked to the ROKN's transformation, however the influence of factors such as economic security and economic growth need to be contextualised in relation to the defense needs of the ROK and the transformation of the ROKN.¹⁴

In examining the literature regarding the general state and causes of naval development in the Asia-Pacific region, what is evident is that a degree of consensus has been reached. However the unique circumstances of the ROK and its navy (as outlined in Chapter 1) and the lack of an in-depth assessment of its transformation means that further research is needed to discover how ROKN transformation fits in with these underlying factors. To further contextualise the question, an assessment of the literature regarding the PLAN and the JMSDF and their own transformations is necessary.

The PRC and Japan are two of the ROK's closest neighbours and although at different periods both have undergone or are undergoing their own naval transformations. It is clear that the transformation of the JMSDF beginning in the 1960's, while superficially similar to the current transformation of the ROKN, has its own set of unique circumstances. The constraints on naval transformation included: an electorate and parliament that was deeply

¹³ Calder, Kent E. (1996) *Asia's Deadly Triangle*. London: Nicholas Brearley Publishing.

¹⁴ Matthews does mention the almost unique link between the government and major industry in the ROK, PRC and Japan. However there is a lack of commentary on this factor and the rise of their navies.

suspicious of military growth, constitutional and legal barriers to the use of force and the fears of its regional neighbours. Conversely the US strongly encouraged the Japanese to engage more with its own defense and to shoulder a greater share of the defence burden during the cold war. It was under these circumstance that the JMSDF changed from a limited force to the most powerful post-cold war navy in the Asia-pacific notwithstanding the USN.

What drove this transformation was according to Graham and Wooley, a combination of US pressure for greater military involvement and the Japanese decision that the JMSDF was the perfect tool with which to respond to such pressure. The reasoning behind this was both internal and external. Internally, the JMSDF already existed in the public consciousness having bases near major population centres and it was the only service that had been continuously operational since the end the WWII. In addition, its operations could be conducted outside of the population's view. Thus the suspicion of military growth would be somewhat alleviated. In addition, as Graham points out, the JMSDF was the natural heir of the Imperial Navy, their officers had greater influence in parliament and industry (thus reinforcing the importance of SLOC security), a better working relationship with their US counterparts and an institutional memory of the effects of a naval blockade.¹⁵ This allowed them to emphasise SLOC security, something which was both domestically and internationally understandable in terms of Japan's massive economic growth during that period. Such a mission provided the JMSDF with the ability to grow into a what was essentially a full navy and it met with the needs of the US forces under whose umbrella it would operate. The substantial driving force behind creating a more powerful JMSDF was US

¹⁵ See: Graham, E. (2006). *Japan's sea lane security, 1940-2004: a matter of life and death?* Oxon:Routledge. & Wooley, P. J. (1999). *Japan's Navy: Politics & Paradox*. London: Lynne Rienner.

pressure which when combined with the internal factors mentioned above created an environment where the JMSDF could thrive.

In contrast the development of the PLAN is occurring concurrently with that of the ROKN. Although the concept of transforming the PLAN from a coastal to blue water force may have taken hold at the end of the 1970's, implementation has been slow and has only truly taken place since 2000. With the growth of the PRC as an economic and political power there has been recognition in Beijing of the necessity of creating a stronger naval force. This growth coincided with the downgrading of the Soviet land threat and the lessening importance of the continentalist view in Beijing. As Cole points out, the development of the coast into a primary economic zone, the past use of the sea by foreign powers to influence China, the need to secure offshore resources and energy to sustain the PRC's economic growth and the desire of the PRC to expand its regional influence and combat the influence of the other regional powers were all drivers of PLAN development.¹⁶ Kane uses these arguments and states that ultimately the PRC, in order to look after its own interests and ambitions, will need to protect its global assets and therefore government needs and the desire of the PLAN admirals merged under the idea of naval reform.¹⁷

The transformation of the JMSDF and PLAN from small coastal navies into blue water forces seems to be relatively similar to the process the ROKN is currently undergoing. There are similarities, in terms of the relationship between economic growth, energy security and naval development however the question of how this relates to ROKN transformation does

¹⁶ Cole, Bernard D. (2001). *The Great Wall at Sea*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press.

¹⁷ Kane, Thomas, M. (2002). *Chinese Grand Strategy and Maritime Power*. London: Frank Cass Publishers. 64 & 108

need to be addressed. This applies also to the influence of the US in relation to Japanese naval development and what role they play in ROKN transformation. The relatively junior status of both the PLAN and ROKN compared to the PLA and ROKA within their prospective defence establishments also raises questions of similarities however again they need to be addressed. These developments provide an academic context to ROKN reform in that navies in the region that have undergone a similar process, however it is essential to note that despite this similarity the drivers behind and nature of such changes are substantially different.

II.IV ROK THEMATIC LITERATURE

This review will now focus on 6 themes which have emerged throughout the reviewed literature. These themes are the relationship between Japan and the PRC as drivers of ROKN modernisation, SLOC Security, the DPRK, the South Korean defence industry, the influence of the US and internal political factors. It will examine each of these themes in turn looking at the sourcing used, the analysis conducted and knowledge gaps that emerge. Although the literature presents these themes in a number of contexts, this paper will primarily focus on factors which have influenced ROKN transformation. It is important to note that none of the literature reviewed at this point is specifically related to the ROKN. The navy is mentioned as part of wider studies if at all, but the relevance is still important as these works set the foundations for the study of the ROKN and wider ROK defence issues.

1) JAPAN AND THE PRC

The geo-strategic situation surrounding the Korean Peninsula is a complex one, filled with historical and cultural differences. ROKN reform must also be examined through the prism of the ROK's political, military and maritime relationships with its three closest neighbours: The PRC, Japan and the DPRK. Each of these relationships presents different challenges for the ROKN. The literature on each relationship must be examined closely as political considerations at the time of writing often have an affect on the nature of the conclusions being drawn.

Certainly the literature on the ROK's military, naval and maritime relationship with both Japan and the PRC is somewhat contradictory. When focusing on both of those countries as drivers for ROKN modernisation, there are a number of schools of thought. Perhaps most prevalent in regards to the PRC is the theory of ROKN unease about PLAN developments and strategic ambitions. The majority of the literature while emphasising this unease does not go as far as saying the PRC is a threat. Earlier writers such as Ball view potential PRC naval power as a justification for ROKN modernisation and Ball goes as far as stating that the ROK has been forced into countering PRC naval modernisation with their own military modernisation.¹⁸ However this is un-sourced and certainly there is little current writing to suggest this is the case. The idea of PRC naval power causing disquiet is also prevalent amongst the more current literature. Dorschner states that ROKN submarine construction is aimed at countering the force modernisation of both China and Japan.¹⁹ This statement was again un-sourced and he provides no evidence to support this claim. In contrast, Medeiros et

¹⁸ Ball, D. (1996). 84

¹⁹ Dorschner, J. (2007). South Korea - Widening Horizons. *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 44 (25), 24-30

al, Sarantakes and Kim have all presented similarly themed arguments, stating a ROK acceptance of PRC power growth both in general and in the maritime sphere. Kim uses comparative evidence from both the ROK and Japanese Defence White Papers to demonstrate that the ROK Ministry of Defence does not try to portray PRC military expansion as a menace.²⁰ While in itself this might not provide evidence in terms of the drivers for ROKN expansion it can be taken with Medeiros et Al. who tie this evidence with ROK military modernisation, stating that China's preoccupation with domestic and economic control results in them not posing a major military threat.²¹ They also posit that the PRC cannot be seen as a major driver or influencing factor in the ROK defence build-up.²² They provide evidence of this through unattributed interviews leaving their findings in need of a degree of verification and also as the subject was about ROK military modernisation it leaves an open question to what extent this could be applied to the ROKN.

The idea that the Chinese military does not pose a threat is countered by Lee and Yoon. Both attempt to demonstrate the potential problems that the Chinese Navy could pose to Korea. Lee mentions the vulnerability of SLOC to Chinese attack.²³ While Yoon, a Captain in the ROKN disagrees, stating that SLOC while vulnerable are a common security interest to both China and Korea. He states that there are other greater potential conflict drivers such as coastline disputes, illegal fishing and the potential effects of a triangular alliance between

²⁰ Kim, S. S. (2006). *The Two Koreas And The Great Powers*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 74

²¹ Medeiros, E.S. et al. (2008). *Pacific Currents: The Responses of U.S. Allies and Security Partners in East Asia to China's Rise*. Santa Monica: RAND. 88

²² Ibid.

²³ Lee, J.-H. (2003). *China and the Asia-Pacific Region Geostrategic Relations and a Naval Dimension*. Lincoln: Writers Advantage. 199

the ROK, Japan and the US (this is something Lee raises concerns about also).²⁴ How far these potential threats have entered the MND's and ROKN's thinking remains debatable and the above contradictions in the arguments do suggest that further research is needed to discover the extent to which the PRC's military and economic power has affected ROKN reform.

As with the PRC, the ROK's naval and maritime relationship with Japan is perceived quite differently in the literature. A selection of literature Medeiros, Dorschner, Lee, Kim, Ball, and Bateman & Rahman all state that at some level Japan's naval and military expansion is viewed with suspicion and may be a driver of ROKN reform. Dorschner states that this is a view that is rarely acknowledged in public by the ROK government, but is driven by historical and cultural mistrust and suspicion.²⁵ This point is expanded on by Medeiros et al. when they assert that Japan would be much more likely than the PRC to influence Korean defence thinking.²⁶ However, they do not analyze this point too deeply as it is not the main function of their work. Indeed many of the English speaking sources which name Japan as a possible threat utilise a small number of sources including newspaper articles from the ROK. While these are the easiest sources to obtain often they reflect the ROK peoples' point of view rather than the government's policies. In contrast to the pessimist analysis of the Korean-Japanese relationship both Manosevitz and Cha present a more optimistic view. Manosevitz argues that Japan-ROK military ties are sought after by both sides and demonstrates this by

²⁴ Yoon, S.-J. (2008). The Chinese Navy's modernization and its impact on the Republic of Korea Navy. In M. McDevitt (Ed.), *Report on the Second KIMS-CNA Conference: "The PLA Navy's Build-up and ROK-USN Cooperation*. Alexandria: Center for Naval Analyses. 35-38

²⁵ Dorschner, J. (2007). South Korea - Widening Horizons. *Jane's Defence Weekly*, 44 (25), 24-30. Drifte, R. (Spring-Summer 1997).

²⁶ Medeiros, E. S., et al. (2008). 88

using a case by case analysis which shows that despite periodic setbacks, military ties such as port calls and SAR drills have continued.²⁷ Cha provides a fuller analysis of this issue, he states that Korean scholars are reluctant or have failed to address the main sources of Japan-ROK rivalry i.e. naval modernisation and nuclear weapons.²⁸ This point is consistent with the lack of available sources with which to comment on this area. One of the few exceptions to this point is in Wie et Al.; this edited volume contains the opinions of unnamed Korean and US academics and military personnel and raises the factor of ROK wariness regarding Japanese naval expansion.²⁹ Cha fails to expand on why the ROKN are building their naval capacity, commenting that Japan have consistently ignored it, taking the “high road” on this issue. They have used ROK naval expansion to expand bi-lateral ties and develop CBM.³⁰ This is an interesting point, but fails to address the question of the thesis. Cha’s own comments regarding a lack of scholarship does indicate a further gap in this field. Thus the effects of the relationship between the ROK and Japan on ROKN reform have not yet been fully explored.

One final theory in this area regarding ROKN reform is proposed by Cha. In an edited volume on Korea’s globalization he hypothesises that globalization in the ROK is not the commonly held idea of multilateralism but one of bilateralism and self help. This idea is expressed through procurement patterns and specifically the creation of a blue-water navy with force projection capabilities, as he states ‘*globalisation through the prism of national identity and*

²⁷ Manosevitz, J. U. (Sep-Oct 2003). Japan and South Korea Security Relations Reach Adolescence. *Asian Survey*, 43 (5), 801-826. P 812-813

²⁸ Cha, V. D. (2000). Japan's Grand Strategy on the Korean Peninsula: Optimistic Realism. *Japanese Journal of Political Science*, 2 (1), 249-274. P. 255-256

²⁹ Wie, S.-H., Kim, C.-S., Wood, P., Carlson, D., & Yung, C. (1995). *Prospects for U.S.-Korean Naval Relations in the 21st Century*. Alexandria: Center for Naval Analyses. 6-7

³⁰ Ibid.265

security'.³¹ This overarching theory would have a substantial impact on any analysis of Korean naval relations and would certainly confirm the view that the ROK is looking at other countries as potential threats and competitors. However, it is important to note that other drivers also play a key role and that in the Asia-Pacific region itself multilateralism is not preferred over bi-lateral ties and alliances. Thus singling out ROK defence and naval reforms might be an overstatement.

2) SLOC PROTECTION

The most common explanation attributed to the reform of the ROKN from a coastal navy to regional blue water one is the protection of ROK SLOC. The sea lines of communication are an understandable and easily asserted driver due to the country's de-facto island status and its heavy reliance on the sea to provide the raw materials and energy with which to support its industrial and power needs. They are also needed to provide an outlet for exports. This reliance on the sea and particularly on energy imports from the Middle East is considered heavily in the majority of the popular literature on this subject.³² Lee, one of the most quoted sources on this subject argues that since 99% of trade occurs by sea, SLOC protection is vital.³³ This point is well made and despite being written in 1990 before major ROKN transformation and written more as a recommendation than a fact it is an argument that has been considered by a majority of other authors including Nam, Pethel, Lee and Meconis &

³¹ Cha, V. D. (2000). The Security Domain of South Korea's Globalization. In S. S. Kim (Ed.), *Korea's Globalization* (pp. 217-241). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

³² For a complete analysis of SLOC security in the Asia-Pacific region see: Guoxing, J. (2000). *Center Occasional Paper: SLOC Security in the Asia Pacific*. Honolulu: Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies.

³³ Lee, S-H (1990). SLOC Security in Northeast Asia: Korean Navy's Role. In Kim, D. & D-W Cho (Eds.) *Korean Sea Power and the Pacific Era* (pp.81-96). Seoul: East and West Studies Series, Yonsei University. 81

Wallace.³⁴ While this may seem obvious there does seem to be a lack of clarity amongst some of the literature. Lee Choon-Kun, Nam and Kandasamy have all either mentioned just SLOC or SLOC in terms of energy imports and trade.³⁵ This contrasts with other authors who have described SLOC protection as both part of a war time scenario or as a dual wartime/peacetime duty.³⁶ This difference has never been fully accounted for and indeed while the majority of authors have relied on defence white papers, which provide little or no in-depth information on the ROKN's goals in regards to the ROK's SLOC, or shipping and ship building statistics there does seem to be little deep analysis of this subject from a ROK point of view published in English. Although Bennett provided an analysis describing the relative level of risk of SLOC attack he does state that these are his own notional assessments predicated on a number of future possible scenarios.³⁷

While this approach suited the paper he was writing, it does not provide an insight into the ROKN's thinking in regards to these matters. Jung writing in Defence News did add insight in to this issue as he provided quotes from both the ROKN CNO Jung-Ok-Keun and ROK President LeeMyung-Bak which seem to support the idea of SLOC protection by re-iterating the ROK's commitment to countering emerging regional and international threats.³⁸ These

³⁴ Nam, C-H (2007). Realigning the U.S. Forces and South Korea's Defense Reform, 2020. *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*, XIX(1), 165-189. & Pethel, J.M. (2001). *Expanding the ROK Navy: Implications for the US-ROK Alliance*. Monterey: Naval Postgraduate School. & Meconis, C.A. & M.D. Wallace (2000). *East Asian Naval Weapons Acquisitions in the 1990s*. Westport: Praeger.

³⁵ Lee, C-K (1994). Korean Sea power's Contribution toward National Security. In Lee, C-K Ed.) *Sea Power and Korea in the 21st Century* (pp.161-177). Seoul: Sejong Institute. & Kandasamy, U. (1996). *Leeds East Asia Papers, South Korea's Military Policy and Defence Posture in the Post-Cold War World*. Leeds: University of Leeds.

³⁶ Kim, D. & Cho, D-W (eds.) (1990). *Korean Sea Power and the Pacific Era*. Seoul: The Institute of East West Studies: Yonsei University.

³⁷ Bennett, B. W. (2006). *RAND Occasional Paper- A Brief Analysis of the Republic of Korea's Defense Reform Plan*. Santa Monica: RAND. P. 11-12

³⁸ Jung, S.-K. (2008, October 20). *South Korean Navy to Expand Blue Water Ops*. Retrieved from Defense News website <http://www.defensenews.com/story.php?i=3778078&c=FEA&s=SPE>

quotes occurred within the context of the piracy threat off the coast of Somali. While the protection of SLOC seems to be the most agreed upon element attributed to ROKN reform there is clear gaps in what form this will take and very little direct evidence from the ROKN itself on this issue.

3) THE DPRK

One legacy of the ROKN 's subordination to the ROKA and the dominance of the land theatre over the maritime one on the peninsula is that there has been a surprising lack of literature regarding the ROKN its missions in relation to the DPRK and the operational environment that it faces. The majority of literature before the 2010 sinking of the *Cheonan* and the shelling of Yeonpyeong-do was focused on the various Nuclear Crises, the US-ROK alliance or the broader developments of peninsular security. The ROKN was relegated to a minor element in the literature and while the necessity of maintaining an ability to combat the DPRK's naval power has been mentioned by various authors this was certainly not the main focus of any significant work.

This has changed somewhat in recent years with the continued provocations on the Northern Limit Line. The literature on this again is somewhat sparse, with Roehrig providing some of the best commentaries on the history of the NLL dispute, the drivers of various provocations and possible solutions.³⁹ Indeed this pattern is replicated by Gause and Morita, both of whom focus on the issues of the dispute, to some extent what is at stake and

³⁹ See: Roehrig, T. (2008). *Korean Dispute over the Northern Limit Line: Security, Economics or International Law*. Maryland Series of Contemporary Asian Studies Volume 2008, no.3.

possible solutions.⁴⁰ Perhaps for the purposes of this thesis, of most interest is Roehrig's breakdown of the significant issues driving the NLL dispute, naming them as; economic (fishing rights), access issues for DPRK commercial vessels, the issue of sovereignty and the overarching problem for the ROK of the security benefits of the current position of the NLL, it being close enough to the DPRK to monitor KPN activity, protect the coast, especially the area around Incheon airport and ensure control over the 5 islands.⁴¹

However, importantly the subsequent impact of the NLL and KPN operations on ROKN procurement and activities has not been fully described. While some works have mentioned the fact that ROKN procurement of patrol boats especially was a reaction to KPN developments and clashes along the NLL, only Roehrig has connected the purchase of a KDX-III Aegis destroyer and other advanced equipment with the DPRK threat and the ROKN's qualitative superiority.^{42 43} The majority of other works focusing on non-traditional threats as being the major driver for ROKN modernisation in the period in question. This is a demonstrable failure to analyse the nature of ROKN development and the true nature of their operations and raises significant questions as to the nature of ROKN development in terms operational priorities.

The sinking of the *Cheonan* and to some extent the shelling of Yeongpyeong-do has brought

⁴⁰ Gause, K. E. (2012). Dealing with North Korean Provocations around the Northern Limit Line. In McDevitt, M.A. & Lea, C.K (eds.) *CNA Maritime Asia Project Workshop One: The Yellow and East China Seas*, (pp. 19-34). Virginia: Centre for Naval Analysis. & Morita, K. (2003). *Northern Limit Line: Demarcation Issues in the Yellow Sea*. Tokyo: National Institute for Defense Studies.

⁴¹ Roehrig, T. (2008). 22-27

⁴² Kang, Y-O (1994). Korea's Military Thinking and Alternatives for Naval Force Development. In C-K Lee (Ed.) *Sea Power and Korea in the 21st Century* (pp.211-219). Seoul: Sejong Institute.

⁴³ Roehrig, T. (2008). 46-47

significantly more attention to the operations of the ROKN and of wider ROK defence reform efforts. While there has been appreciable increase in works analysing the nature of the NLL these have brought nothing substantial to the previously works. Of more interest are the more recent analyses of the impact of these events on the future of the ROK Defence Forces. Much of these works have focused on the Defence Reform plan 307 (also known as Defence Reform 11-30) which has altered the focus of force procurement away from future threats and realigned it towards combating DPRK provocations and their a-symmetric capabilities.⁴⁴ The impact on the ROKN as has been noted by Klinger will be a focus on ASW capabilities and littoral operations and as Hoon states, this will have a significant impact on any regional ambitions as the DPRK dominates the horizon.^{45 46} The one interesting piece of analysis following the Cheonan was by Lee who argues against some of the criticism that the ROKN came under in the ROK stating that the ROKN was trying to develop both littoral and regional platforms, only to be hampered by political and budgetary interference.⁴⁷ This short piece raises a number of interesting questions and while time is still needed to fully assess the impact of the events of 2010 on the ROKN, the gaps in knowledge on ROKN operations along the NLL, their impact on procurement and the true direction of ROKN modernisation are substantial and need further investigation.

4) THE DEFENCE INDUSTRY AND THE US ALLIANCE

Since the 1970's the South Korean government has publically promoted an indigenous

⁴⁴ See: Klinger, B. (2011). South Korea: Taking the Right Steps Toward Defense Reform, Backgrounder No. 2618. Washington D.C. : The Heritage Foundation

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Hoon, H-N (2011). South Korea's Defence Reforms: Impact on the Navy. *RSIS Commentary No.183/2011*.

⁴⁷ Lee, S-H (2010). Issue of the Oceanic Navy and Complement of Naval Force after Warship Cheonan-ham Incident. *Sejong Commentary No. 181*. Seoul: Sejong Institute.

defence industry, this industry, its influence on defence planning and defence planning's influence on it are topics to which large amounts of literature have been dedicated. However, as Surrey points out, information on this subject has been limited however he does add that this situation is improving albeit slowly as the ROK government relaxes its control over export, import and production information.⁴⁸

While the arguments and analysis put forward are not always directly related to the ROKN, the issue of defence spending and its analysis does provide clues in to what drives military spending. Questions arising from the defence industry's relationship with defence spending and reform must include: Who drives, it? Does the government force companies into defence production and if so why? Or do defence companies encourage the government to continually update its equipment in order to keep production lines open? In addition to this the influence of U.S. foreign and defence policy and US military-industrial complex must be also be questioned. These questions will provide clues in to what is driving ROKN reform. One of the primary arguments that emerges from the literature is that the indigenous defence industry is not a profitable one, and only exists due to government incentives and pressure on the major ROK conglomerates (*Chaebols*) to maintain production. Bae, Surrey and Drifte all maintain this argument which calls in to question the idea that ROK companies have pressured the government into defence procurement decisions.⁴⁹ It follows that the government not the defence industry is the driver behind this movement. The main arguments surrounding government attempts to acquire a national defence industry are

⁴⁸ Surrey, E. (2006). *SIPRI Policy Paper No.12, Transparency in the Arms Industry*. Stockholm: Stockholm International Peace Research Institute. 29-33

⁴⁹ See: Surrey (2006). & Bae, J-S. (2003). Country Survey XVIII: The Two Korea's Defence Economy. *Defence and Peace Economics*, 14(1), 61-83. & Drifte (1997). Proliferation in Northeast Asia: South Korea's Dual Use Technology Imports from Japan. *The Non-proliferation Review*, 4(3), 72-82

domestic economic growth, and reducing the ROK's reliance on US support.

The economic argument is a controversial one, the theory that defence reform and its consequent knock on effects for the economy through domestic arms production are a primary driver for ROK defence spending have been dismissed or supported in equal measure. Both Heo and Feffer provide summaries of the arguments relating to the positive and negative effects of defence spending on the economy.⁵⁰ Heo examining the period between 1954 and 1988 suggests that military spending has a neutral impact on the economy but leaves open the question of indirect negative effects.⁵¹ Feffer argues that this argument is weak due to the diversion of funds from other projects which would have better stimulus effects.⁵² He furthers this by stating that using the economic argument to justify or explain defence spending is in itself weak and possibly irrelevant.⁵³ Both of these authors rely on a large number of sources to justify this argument and if it is correct, the question must arise why does the South Korean government state that defence spending especially on indigenous products improves the economy?

The answer to this question could lie in the next argument that the South Korean government has and is attempting to reduce its reliance on the US both militarily and in the defence industry sector. ROK security dependence on the US was a major factor in Korean attempts to create an indigenous defence industry, the 1969 Nixon doctrine which called for

⁵⁰ For an examination of economic theory regarding defence spending and its relationship with the economy see Heo, U. (1996). The political Economy of Defense Spending in South Korea. *Journal of Peace Research*, 33 (4), 483-490

⁵¹ Ibid. 489

⁵² Feffer, J. (2009). Ploughshares into Swords: Economic Implications of South Korean Military Spending. *KEI Academic Paper Series*, 4 (2). 8

⁵³ Ibid. 1

an asianisation of Asian defence forced the Korean government in to developing its own defence industry, this argument is supported by Moon & Lee, Surrey and Feffer.⁵⁴ Feffer continues this by stating that all three major spikes in Korean defence spending have come during actual or imagined shifts in US defence policy in the Asia-Pacific region.⁵⁵ It is plausible to conclude that increased defence spending has been driven by both a desire to improve forces to cover any American withdrawal and a desire to build a defence industry in case of a reduction in American arms support.

In terms of the defence industry most of the literature focuses on a failure to create an indigenous defence industry specifically in high technology areas. Bae describes a failure of defence nationalisation and the continued reliance since the 1980's on imported weapons. Both Suh and Bae describe false claims from the MND regarding the level of indigenously produced weapons, stating that due to a lack of technological R&D ability Korean companies have a dependence on semi-manufactured or assembled products with only final production occurring in South Korea.⁵⁶ US arms companies are at the centre of this reliance. This point is confirmed by Choi who describes the changing nature of the dependent relationship from grants and direct aid to technical help to the supply of component parts. In his words '*what has changed is the form of dependence not the dependence itself*'.⁵⁷ What is surprising is the lack of literature which contradicts this understanding of the Korean defence industry.

⁵⁴ Moon, C-I, & Lee, J-Y (2008). The Revolution in Military Affairs and the Defense Industry in South Korea. *Security Challenges*, 4(4), 117-134

⁵⁵ Feffer (2009). 4

⁵⁶ Bae, J.-S. (2003). 76; Suh, J.-J. (2007). *Power, Interest and Identity in Military Alliances*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 84

⁵⁷ Choi, J. C. (1998). South Korea. In R. P. Singh (Ed.), *Arms Procurement Decision Making Volume I: China, India, Israel, Japan, South Korea and Thailand* (pp. 177-210). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 195

This method of arms procurement does lead to the subsequent question of what influence the US and their Korean counterparts have in determining defence reform. The idea of a military-industrial complex within Korea is an understudied one. Feffer contrasts two arguments one supported by Moon Chung-in and Kim Jong-dae (two Korean defence analysts) stating that defence contractors have limited or no influence and the ROK military (specifically the ROKAF) thinks about procurement demands by 'reading US catalogues'.⁵⁸ Opposing this simplistic portrayal is Suh; While Feffer uses his analysis to demonstrate a complex group of contractors, officers and officials dependent on money from the government.⁵⁹ A closer examination of Suh's work shows that he explicitly avoids debating whether such a military-industrial complex exists.⁶⁰ He does provide examples of the linkage between the defence industry and the military, specifically the hiring of retired officers and a method in which the armed forces often purchase military equipment before establishing a list of operational requirements, often on the recommendation of arms-import companies. He also provides examples of how the defence industry in the ROK could influence the government to over-ride MND recommendations in order to support their own interests.⁶¹

The idea of interoperability and US pressure is also a factor influencing procurement. Feffer and Suh both argue that American weapons systems have been purchased despite not possibly being the best choice. Choi supports this by mentioning Bill Clinton's public admonishment of the ROK for agreeing an arms for debt agreement with Russia.⁶² This can

⁵⁸ Feffer, J. (2009). 3

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ Suh, J.-J. (2007). *Power, Interest and Identity in Military Alliances*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 139

⁶¹ Ibid. 140-143

⁶² Choi, J. C. (1998). South Korea. In R. P. Singh (Ed.), *Arms Procurement Decision Making Volume I: China, India, Israel, Japan, South Korea and Thailand* (pp. 177-210). Oxford: Oxford University Press. 195

be attributed to arguments of interoperability, US government pressure or a now pre-conditioned view within the ROK government to look to US systems before all others. Suh argues that it is possibly all three and uses this interlinked concept as a central tenant for his book. The two works by both Feffer and Suh are the most authoritative pieces on this subject area. They do however fail to address some of the key questions of the thesis. The works cited above provide a basis with which to assess the ROK's defence industry, however there are significant limitations in terms of evidence and analysis on the relationship between the ROKN and arms manufacturing in Korea

5) INTERNAL POLITICAL FACTORS

The final area which appears in the literature is ROK internal politics. There is little or no consensus on this issue however in recent years especially under the last two presidents it has become slightly clearer. One of the primary reasons for this has been the change in forms of government; the ROK has transitioned from dictatorship, nearly always run by a ROKA general, to representative democracy. As Moon & Hyun state each change in leadership led to changes in the style of government and policy thus preventing any clear consensus on defence spending and its direction.⁶³ This is confirmed by Suh who provided examples of how two separate leaders altered military procurement and defence research in order to support their own political needs.⁶⁴

Despite the lack of research into the military spending policies under previous governments

⁶³ Moon, C.-I., & Hyun, I.-T. (1992). Muddling through security, growth and welfare: The Political Economy of Defense Spending in South Korea. In S. Chan, & A. Mintz (Eds.), *Defence, Welfare and Growth* (pp. 137-163). London: Routledge. 140

⁶⁴ Suh, J.-J. (2007). 69-70

what is evident is that the dominance of the army in the political leadership hindered the development of an independent naval policy. This position has changed and is one of the key points regarding naval reform. In this regard the leadership of Roh Moo-hyun has come under a degree of analysis. The Defence Reform 2020 plan calls for a reduction in the influence of the ROKA especially at staff and JCS levels.⁶⁵ Bechtol, Feffer and Nam identify Roh's aim of reducing the influence of the army and Feffer explicitly states that inter-service competition was a driving factor of higher military spending.⁶⁶ Certainly as one would expect it is clear that politics has had an influence on defence spending, as shown by the Roh government, but to what extent is another question that has been left unaddressed.

There is an argument that navies in Asia have risen along with liberal democracy. Heginbotham dismisses the idea that a) the end of the cold war and the subsequent destablisation led to a rise in the Asian navies and b) that Asian naval transformation has occurred due to economic growth. On point a) he argues that naval build-ups were occurring before and after the end of the cold war and that on point b) the navy has declined in some states despite high rates of growth⁶⁷. Using the ROKN as one example he states that the transfer from military rule to democracy led to an adjustment in the defence budget in favor of the navy.⁶⁸ He continues to argue that while not always supporting liberal and economic ideas, a navy's necessary dependence on higher-educated personnel coincides with a

⁶⁵ For details see Bennett, B. W. (2006). *RAND Occasional Paper- A Brief Analysis of the Republic of Korea's Defence Reform Plan*. Santa Monica: RAND. 117

⁶⁶ Feffer, J. (2009). 3. & Bechtol, B. (2005). Civil-Military Relations in the Republic of Korea: Background and Implications. *Korea Observer*, 36(4), 603-630. & Nam (2007).

⁶⁷ Heginbotham, E. (2002). The Fall and Rise of Navies in East Asia-Military Organizations, Domestic Politics and Grand Strategy. *International Security*, 27 (2), 86-125. 86-87

⁶⁸ Ibid. 89-90

natural support for liberal democracy.⁶⁹ This is well argued and certainly it is feasible to suggest that for Asian navies it is a possibility, however his evidence and analysis in relation to the ROK is underdeveloped due to the length of the work. Also there is some difficulty in generalising across a region about a topic which so many different variables. It is true that in the ROK naval development and reform did occur largely after democracy took hold, but why that is cannot solely be ascribed to the ROKN's support of liberalism. It is necessary to research the civil-military relationships within the South Korea government to ascertain the relationship between the military and sitting government. This relationship has been alluded to by Boutilier while mentioning the influence of a small group of navalists within the government, he fails to provide any evidence for this assertion or explain the level of influence they have.⁷⁰ A useful guide when exploring this topic is provided by Glete, he examines the relationship between interest groups both inside and outside of the government and the development of navies. He posits that these interest groups are the most important factor in developing a naval force. The state has an interest in a maritime monopoly of violence in order to encourage economic growth, while both maritime and landed interests have a concern in naval warfare and organisation.⁷¹ While obviously dealing with a different period, the ideas put forward by Glete provide a useful guide when examining the relationship between the ROKN and the interest groups that have influenced it. There is a significant knowledge gap in this area that needs to be addressed in order to answer the thesis question.

⁶⁹ Ibid. 100-103

⁷⁰ Boutilier, J. (2001). Mid-sized Navies in the Asia-Pacific Region, 2000-2025: The Case of the Canadian, South Korean and Japanese Navies. In Wilson, D. (ed.) Papers in Australian Maritime Affairs No.8 Maritime War in the 21st Century, (pp. 73-87). Canberra: Defence Publishing Service. 86

⁷¹ Glete, J. (1993). *Navies and Nations: Warships, Navies, and State Building in Europe and America, 1500-1860*. Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell International. 477-478

II.V CONCLUSION

The literature reviewed above presents a number of potential drivers of ROKN modernisation; however no one study has provided a concrete analysis of this subject. The major arguments surrounding this question are the external strategic factors i.e. SLOC security, peer competition between the Asia-Pacific nations, the defence industry both in the US and in the ROK and internal political factors. The disparate nature of the works and their lack of focus on the topic of ROKN reform have left a number of questions outstanding that require further research.

- 1- To what extent does SLOC protection factor in driving ROKN reform? Is it a major driver or is it a corollary of other factors?
- 2- Have PRC and Japanese naval modernisation driven ROKN modernisation and to what extent does this peer competition and potential for hostilities influence ROKN reform?
- 3- How has the need to maintain operations against the DPRK influenced ROKN naval modernisation and did the sinking of the *Cheonan* alter the direction of naval development?
- 4- What is the role of the defence industry and did it push for or was it pushed into supporting naval modernisation?
- 5- Did the US influence the nature and level of ROKN reform? Was this for economic reasons, strategic reasons or alliance maintenance?

6- What is the role of internal politics on ROKN reform and how has the democratisation of the ROK impacted the position of the ROKN within the ROK's defence establishment?

In the literature reviewed none of these questions have been answered in a satisfactory manner. This has been primarily due to a lack of focus on the ROKN and the domination of topics surrounding but rarely directly related to the ROKN and its modernisation

CHAPTER 3

THE ROK AND THE EAST ASIA MARITIME

ENVIRONMENT: OPPORTUNITIES AND THREATS

III.I INTRODUCTION

An examination of the complexity of the ROK's relationship with the sea is fundamental to understanding the reasoning behind the ROKN's doctrinal and platform development. As a state operating within a dynamic, interdependent and potentially unstable maritime environment, the ROK has been forced by the situation it finds itself in to react to the potential threats posed by the sea. As its reliance on the sea has increased so too has that of its neighbours with the PRC, Japan and the majority of the countries in the region increasing their naval forces to protect their developing maritime interests. The reasons behind the increased Asian focus on the maritime environment lies primarily with the region's growing economic power and its reliance to sustain this power, coupled with a developing focus on exploiting maritime resources and a resultant emphasis on sovereignty and the exploitation of resources within congested and contested waters.

As a factor in explaining ROKN naval development, the nature of the Asian maritime sphere particularly since the end of the Cold War is important, however the unique geo-strategic

position of the ROK has meant that while the strategic elements of the Asian maritime sphere play a role so does the maritime and naval development of the DPRK, which too has developed its naval power forcing the ROKN to develop to protect the ROK's growing local, regional and global interests but also to maintain a capacity to defend against the conventional and a-symmetric threat from the North.

This chapter will examine the Asian maritime environment and how it is an increasingly vital engine of the region's growth. It will then go on to explain how the seas in East Asia have become increasingly militarised as a result of regional tension, resource competition and legal jurisdictional issues. It will place the ROK within this complex environment and assess the development of the ROK's maritime security perception in terms of the DPRK, its regional neighbours and the regional maritime security environment. It concludes that ROKN modernisation is the result of an ever-changing security perception which combines the constantly evolving threat from the DPRK and the shifting challenges of being a medium trading power in the waters of East Asia and requires a force capable of continuous operations in the littoral while having the ability to respond to varied potential threats in its territorial waters and regional environment.

III.II THE ASIAN MARITIME REGION

Asia is a region defined by its maritime nature. The presence of vital SLOC and strategic chokepoints that run throughout the region serve to emphasise the geostrategic importance of the sea not only for East Asia but the world. Connecting the Indian Ocean to the South

China Sea, the Malacca, Lombok and Sunda straits are the main conduits through which imports and exports are carried from the Middle East and Indian Ocean in to the South China Sea and the Pacific. The Malacca Strait, described as Asia's key maritime chokepoint, sees over 60,000 ships transit per year, carrying over a half of the world's oil and a quarter of the world's traded goods.¹ This vital corridor which is only 1.5 nautical miles wide at one point demonstrates not only the sheer volume of maritime traffic that flows into Asian waters but also the precarious nature of such a flow.² Further north the Tsugaru, Tsushima, La Perouse, Korea and Taiwan Straits all mark major maritime transit points, specifically for trade between the nations of Northeast Asia and their access to the sea routes of the Pacific ocean.³

Asia and especially Northeast Asia have a large presence in the international maritime trade. Between 2003 and 2009, the ROK, Japan and the PRC built between 80 and 90% of the world's commercial ships (83.4% (2003) and 89.9% (2009)). With the ROK having the highest production rates (37%-39%) and the PRC and Japan following (in 2009 roughly 25% each, however the PRC increased its production by 15% between 2003 and 2009).⁴ Moreover, Asian parent companies own more than 36% of the world's shipping.⁵ The reasons such a

¹ Sawhney, R. (2006). *Redefining the Limits of the Straits: A Composite Malacca Straits Security System*. IDSS Commentaries, No. 37/2006.

² Cole, B. D. (2001). *The Great Wall at Sea: China's Navy Enters the Twenty-First Century*. Annapolis: Naval Institute Press. 8

³ For a detailed description of the use of each strait for shipping purposes and their legal status as regards ownership see: Guoxing, J. (2000) *Center Occasional Paper: SLOC Security in the Asia Pacific*. Honolulu: Asia Pacific Center for Security Studies.

⁴ Shipbuilders of Japan (2009). *Ship Building Statistics September 2009*. 3. Retrieved from Shipbuilders Association of Japan website: http://www.sajn.or.jp/e/statistics/Shipbuilding_Statistics_Sep2009.pdf

⁵ International Maritime Organisation (2009). *International Shipping and World Trade Facts and Figures October 2009*. 14. Retrieved from International Maritime Organisation website: http://www.imo.org/includes/blastDataOnly.asp?data_id%3D28127/InternationalShippingandWorldTrade-factsandfiguresoct2009rev1_tmp65768b41.pdf

presence in international maritime trade exists can be explained by examining the total cargo volume of world ports, where Asian countries specifically Singapore, the PRC, Japan and the ROK have 14 ports in the top twenty globally and 9 in the top 10.⁶ Again, this is a demonstration of the economic power currently within Asia and more importantly their reliance on the sea. This reliance is emphasised by examining the oil imports of the PRC, Japan and the ROK, who together import more than 10000 barrels per day, the majority of which is transported by sea from the Middle East.⁷

As Asia has become increasingly reliant on the sea as a medium of transport, the geostrategic importance of the oceans has been brought in to sharper focus. The passage of UNCLOS in 1992 which set out general guidelines for the delineation of maritime territory and access rights in combination with historical contestations over the possession of off-shore islands and the increasing ability of states to exploit undersea resources has heightened the security pressures within the region. Maritime disputes exist between all of the states in Northeast Asia and extend into the South China Sea involving many of the coastal nations of Southeast Asia. These disputes which are often underwritten by historical tension, nationalistic impulses and political populism have combined with an overall increase in naval power across the region to create a complex security interaction between military strength, fluctuating regional relationships and often divisive territorial and jurisdictional disputes.

⁶ Statistics accessed from the Association of American Port Authorities. Retrieved from Association of American Shipbuilders website: <http://aapa.files.cms-plus.com/Statistics/WORLD%20PORT%20RANKINGS%2020081.pdf>

⁷ Statistics Accessed from the U.S. Energy Information Administration. Retrieved from EIA website: <http://tonto.eia.doe.gov/country/index.cfm>

1) DISPUTED TERRITORY, SOVEREIGNTY AND MILITARY BUILD UPS: ISSUES FOR ASIA

The most strategically and politically important issue within the Asian maritime environment is that of disputed maritime territorial sovereignty and the contentious demarcation of maritime boundaries. This issue is significant in that often these disputes become more than geographic and economic arguments but are couched in terms of nationalism and populist internal politics, making them particularly destabilising in terms inter-Asian relations and potentially disruptive to regional maritime trade. While the majority of contested sovereignty claims are predicated on differing interpretations of international law and historical context, the competition between the nations in the region to exploit the sea's natural resources has exacerbated and brought to a fore the issue of these disputes. Additionally the introduction of UNCLOS which was agreed in 1982 but not internally ratified by most Asian countries until the 1990s has added an element of vitality to existing disputes as nations manoeuvre to establish the legality of their territorial claims and cement their access to valuable fishing and energy exploitation rights.

While relatively specific in its division of maritime sovereignty and economic rights, the UNCLOS provisions have a number of failings which have served to exacerbate existing tensions. The first of which is the lack of a mechanism for resolving disagreements arising out of competing claims.⁸ This is especially important in the Asian maritime environment as its narrow nature means that many states' have overlapping claims to EEZ and continental shelves. Such legal conflicts have impacted on the ability of states to exploit the region's undersea resources and while some bi-lateral agreements have been made, what remains is

⁸ Koo, M G. (2009). *Island Disputes and Maritime Regime Building in East Asia Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. New York: Springer. 170

an extensive maritime region which is potentially rich in resources that has been placed under significant political and geostrategic tension by conflicting claims over exploitation rights.

Further exacerbating such tension is the interaction between UNCLOS and the disputed control of Islands. UNCLOS allows EEZ and continental shelves to be set from baselines generated from inhabited land masses and as result control of disputed Islands would allow a state to expand its economic exploitation rights significantly. However, UNCLOS does not address the issue of disputed territory. As such the legitimate control of islands is based on historical claims, current control, past treaties and agreements and often the proximity of territory to a state's mainland shoreline.⁹ In addition this issue, especially but not exclusively in Northeast Asia is intertwined with the legacy of war and occupation, specifically the consequences of Japanese expansionism in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. As such the control of disputed Islands which is often founded in nationalism and political populism has become a significant underlying factor in heightening such disputes beyond the legal and into the realm of internal politics and regional security.

Finally, there is a military dimension to the UNCLOS and that is the differing interpretations of the navigation and operating rights within an EEZ in terms of military activities. Globally a number of states have adopted an interpretation which restricts military operations within EEZ, the most significant of whom is the PRC who have sought to limit or prevent foreign

⁹ Dolven, B et Al. (2013). *Maritime Territorial Disputes in East Asia: Issues for Congress*. Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service. 6

military activity (including over flight) within their EEZ.^{10 11} This interpretation of the control over the EEZ is in direct conflict with the US who views the EEZ as part of international waters and thus any activity as long as it is not breaking the economic provisions of UNCLOS can be allowed.¹² Examples of this conflict of interpretation include the 2009 Impeccable incident, when the USNS *Impeccable* (a US survey ship) was harassed by PRC vessels within the PRC claimed EEZ. This was followed by the US stating that the ship was operating within international waters and therefore free to navigate while the PRC stated that the US had broken international law and had violated the country's national security.¹³ While the legal argument is complex in this case, the fact remains that the differing interpretation only serves to enhance the potential for conflict and raise the importance of the issue of these disputes.

The PRC's claims illustrate not only the complexity but also the vitality of these issues. Their claims to sovereignty over islands in the East China and South China Seas were proclaimed in the PRC's 1992 Law on Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone. If sovereignty was achieved with the extension of its EEZ it would have exclusive economic rights to almost the entire South China Sea and with its views on limiting military navigation would exercise control over a vital trade route and navigation route in Asia.¹⁴ While it is unlikely that this would occur due to resistance from other claimants and regional powers which use the area for trade and

¹⁰ Other states include Brazil, Malaysia, Uruguay and Vietnam.

¹¹ Fang, Y. (2010) *Exclusive Economic Zone (EEZ) Regime in East Asian Waters: Military and Intelligence-gathering activities, Marine Scientific Research (MSR) and Hydrographic Surveys in an EEZ*. Singapore: RSIS Working Paper. 11

¹² Ibid. 9

¹³ Ibid. 15-16

¹⁴ This argument is paraphrased from Dutton, P. (2009). *United States Senate Committee on Foreign Relations Hearing on Maritime Disputes and Sovereignty Issues in East Asia*, July 2010. 1-2

military purposes this does demonstrate the importance of the island dispute issue.

ISLAND DISPUTES

- SPRATLY: **PRC**, **TAIWAN**, **VIETNAM**, *MALAYSIA*, *PHILIPPINES*, *BRUNEI*
- PARACEL: **PRC**, **TAIWAN**, **VIETNAM**
- KURILE: **RUSSIA**, **JAPAN**
- DOKDO: **ROK**, **JAPAN**
- SENKAKU: **JAPAN**, **PRC**, **TAIWAN**

RESOURCE DISPUTES

- EEZ: **ROK**, **JAPAN**, **PRC**
- CONTINENTAL SHELF: **ROK**, **JAPAN**, **PRC**

CONTINENTAL DISPUTE

- **TAIWAN**, **PRC**

* RED INDICATES CURRENT OCCUPIER OF ISLAND * ITALICS INDICATES PARTIAL CLAIMS TO ISLAND GROUP

TABLE 3.1: Maritime disputes in Asia. Taken from ROKN Headquarters (2008). 2008 Naval Policy Report <2008년도 해군정책 보고서 > Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 2

Table 3.1 demonstrates the all-encompassing nature of the ongoing maritime disputes in North and Southeast Asia, with nearly all regional maritime states involved in high stakes posturing and legal manoeuvring to legitimise their claims. At the same time another element has been introduced to this conflicted area and that is the growth of naval power. The rise of the region's economic importance and subsequent spending power in combination with the significant maritime issues mentioned above have seen a significant

focus on naval procurement. This increase in naval power extends across Asia and as Yoshihara points out it is too simplistic to assess it by breaking down the number of platforms each country possesses due to the increasing levels of lethality and technology.¹⁵ It is this factor that is important, while the overall number of platforms may be reducing, the significance in the type procured, especially in submarines, which many countries including Vietnam, Malaysia and Singapore are buying and multifunctional surface platforms has added to the potential for misunderstanding. From Japan, the PRC and the ROKN in Northeast Asia and down from Vietnam to Singapore in the south, most maritime states are investing in their maritime forces. The drivers behind such development as highlighted in the literature review are multifaceted and extremely complex, however what is apparent is an element of maintaining parity with neighbours, especially in the area of submarine procurement and what is certain is that such arms procurement brings an element of added vitality to already sometimes fractious disputes.

For the ROK the naval development of the PRC and Japan is of most significance and will be examined here. These two countries are seen by the ROKN as their most significant regional rivals outside of the DPRK and while Russia did figure in this calculation its influence in the naval sphere has been in steady decline. This is evidenced by the portrayal of neighbouring countries in many recent naval publications, alongside the DPRK, the naval power of the US (whose influence on ROKN policy is described in chapter 5), that of the PRC and Japan are the most often examined.

¹⁵ Yoshihara, T. (2008). Introduction In. T. Yoshihara & Holmes J. R (Ed.), *Asia Looks Seaward Power and Maritime Strategy* (pp.1-16) London: Praeger Security International. 6

Unlike the PRC, the ROK and many other countries in the region, Japan has not been faced with the prospect of developing a regional doctrine from scratch. Built upon the country's imperial history the Japanese Maritime Self Defense Force's (JMSDF) doctrine has since the 1960's focused on protecting its SLOC and during the cold war complementing its major ally with mine warfare and ASW forces aimed at containing the threat posed by the Soviet Pacific Fleet. Since the end of the Cold War Japan's naval development has continued to focus on SLOC protection while adding capabilities aimed at defending nation from the threat posed by the DPRK, protecting Japanese territory (both the homeland and its outlying Island including Senkaku) and future asymmetric threats. In this sense Japan's maritime commitments and policies have not undergone substantial changes rather a natural evolution reflecting altering security concerns.¹⁶

In the face of these roles is a domestic dilemma of reconciling such capabilities with its post-war pacifist constitution and public. A result of this is that Japan has traditionally operated with a self imposed regulation on the roles of its armed forces born out of the suspicion of the militarisation and subsequent aggression that was brought about by and caused the downfall of Imperial Japan. This internal suspicion is replicated externally with many countries in Asia traditionally wary of any Japanese move toward a normalisation of the role its military play. This is primarily due to the events of WWII and the perception that Japan has not fully appreciated the central role it played in the conflict. As the ROK's Defence White Paper 2000 states:

¹⁶ Wooley P. J. (1999). *Japan's Navy: Politics and Paradox*. London: Lynne Rienner. 17

'Japan operates under the existing perception outside of Japan that due to its historical offences and large-scale military development it is a latent threat'.

Despite this problem Japan has begun to develop a more comprehensive security strategy with a view to increasing its own security and becoming a modern stake holder within the international sphere.

This is demonstrated in the revision of their defence stance which was contained within the National Defense Program Outline (NDPO) of 1995. It introduced some substantial changes to their previous policies. Significantly it referred to regional security for the first time and used the phrase 'areas surrounding Japan' as an arena for US-Japan security cooperation. In addition it included international peacekeeping and international relief operations as missions to which the JSDF could contribute. The 1995 NDPO was then reflected in the 1997 Guidelines for US-Japan Defense which set out the basis for joint responses in the case of direct assault on Japan or security situations in the region surrounding Japan.^{17 18} A further NDPO in 2005 continued this trend toward a more realist assessment of their security environment, highlighting concerns regarding the PRC and announcing Japan's interest in security from the Middle East to East Asia.¹⁹ Indeed the reconfiguration of Japan's defence posture can be seen in the passing of 21 pieces of security legislation between 1992 and 2007, which allowed for JSDF participation in peacekeeping operations, increased security cooperation with the

¹⁷ Fouse, D. (2005). Japan's FY 2002 National Defense Program Outline: New Concepts, Old Compromises. *Asia-Pacific Center for Security Studies*, 4 (3). 2

¹⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan (Mofa). *The Guidelines for Japan-US Defense Cooperation*. Retrieved from MOFA website: <http://www.mofa.go.jp/region/n-america/us/security/guideline2.html>

¹⁹ Hughes, C. W. (2008). Japan's Military Doctrine, Expenditure and Power Projection. *Adelphi Papers*, 48 (403), 35-52. 36

U.S. and investment in missile defence.²⁰ The NDPO which was released in 2010 further highlighted the potential destabilising effects of the rise of the PRC but tempers this by acknowledging the potential for greater cooperation with the PRC in non-traditional security areas.²¹ ²² Importantly, the 2010 NDPO highlights the addition of extra submarines to its submarine fleet, up from 16-22 and while reducing the number of destroyer flotillas from 5-4 this was done to consolidate and improve their operational capability.²³

| JMSDF | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| SUBMARINES | | | | | |
| SSK | 15 | 18 | 16 | 16 | 16 |
| SURFACE COMBATANTS | | | | | |
| DDG | 27 | 31 | 30 | 39 | 40 |
| DD | 16 | 20 | 12 | 5 | 4 |
| FFG | 8 | 8 | 9 | 9 | 8 |
| PFM | 0 | 0 | 0 | 6 | 6 |
| MCM | 2 | 2 | 2 | 4 | 4 |
| LST | 6 | 7 | 5 | 4 | 5 |
| AOE | 4 | 4 | 4 | 5 | 5 |

TABLE 3.2: JMSDF Platform Numbers and Development 1990-2010. Figures from: IISS, The Military Balance.

Since the 1980's the PRC has developed a more engaged maritime strategy with a significant shift in its doctrine, platforms and ambitions away from coastal defence and toward a regional role within the Asian maritime security architecture. The People's Liberation Army Navy (PLAN) had since the foundation of the communist state played a supporting role to the army, much in the same vein as the ROKN and KPN. Its largely coastal forces were designed to support a major land engagement particularly with the Soviet Union and were

²⁰ Hickey, D., & Kelan Lu, L. (2007). Japan's Military Modernization: The Chinese Perspective. In J. C. Hsiung (Ed.), *China and Japan at Odds Deciphering the Perpetual Conflict* (pp. 95-112). New York: Palgrave MacMillan. 102

²¹ Park, Y. J. (2010). *Japan's National Defense Program Guidelines 2010 and Its Implication to South Korean Security Policies*. East Asia Institute Commentary No.16. 3

²² Ibid. 4

²³ Ministry of Defense of Japan(2010) *National Defense Program Guidelines for FY 2011 and Beyond*. Retrieved from Ministry of Defense website : http://www.mod.go.jp/e/d_act/d_policy/pdf/guidelinesFY2011.pdf

indicative of the continental focus of the PRC in its development stages between which lasted until the 1980's.²⁴ However with the diminishing threat posed by the USSR, the upper echelons of the PRC defence establishment initiated a shift in strategy away from large engagements toward peripheral conflicts, such as Taiwan, while at the same time undertaking a process of modernisation of its armed forces. This modernisation is designed to shift the PLA and its component parts away from a manpower quantitative focus toward a technological quality based one which would be able to deal with local wars under high-technology conditions.²⁵ Such modernisation coincided with the development of an 'Active Defence' higher defence strategy which was designed to encompass the modernisation of its forces with a doctrinal shift aimed at dealing with the realities of modern warfare.²⁶

Within this overall shift in military planning, the PLAN developed its own concepts for carrying out the maritime aspect of 'Active Defence'. Under the leadership of Adm. Liu Huaqing, the PLAN shifted its focus from a traditional coastal defence mission toward the concept of 'offshore defence'. Approved in 1985, this concept was publically at least non-aggressive, designed to defend the offshore area of the PRC. What this means in practice is matter of some debate as to the definition of offshore.²⁷ While it can be defined as within the 200 mile limit of the PRC's EEZ, it was described by Admiral Liu as being the first island chain, an area which includes the Yellow, East China and South China Seas and is bounded by a line running from Japan to Indonesia, a second chain has also been mentioned, which

²⁴ USN Office of Naval Intelligence (2009). *The People's Liberation Army Navy A Modern Navy With Chinese Characteristics*. Maryland: Office of Naval Intelligence. 5 Retrieved from Federation of American Scientists website: www.fas.org/irp/agency/.oni/pla-navy.pdf

²⁵ USN Office of Naval Intelligence (2007). *China's Navy 2007*. Maryland: Office of Naval Intelligence. 24 Retrieved from the Federation of American Scientists website: www.fas.org/nuke/guide/china/oni2007.pdf

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Ibid.

would push the PRC's maritime interests out to 1800 nm off the Chinese coast.²⁸

This concept of maritime operations was driven in part by the overall changes that the military were undergoing at the time. However concerns over Taiwan and an increasing acknowledgment of the value of the sea were also central factors in the PLAN force development. In terms of Taiwan, the PLAN has always had a role, however the possibility of a US intervention in any cross strait crises coupled with the realisation that modern US war fighting technology was becoming increasingly dominant forced the PLAN into developing platforms which could operate at a distance from the Chinese coast thus mitigating to some extent the threat from US precision strike weapons and nullify but not match the USN's superior naval capabilities.²⁹ Beyond Taiwan, the PRC has recognised its own immediate and long term interests and the role of the PLAN in defending them, this is evidenced in a 1992 speech by then President Jiang Zemin who spoke about the need to protect the country's 'maritime interests'.³⁰ This concept was elaborated upon by President Hu Jintao who among other things looked to the armed forces to protect state sovereignty and defend the interests of national development.³¹ Later in 2007, he singled out maritime interests as fundamental to the PRC's national economic development.³² As a result of this policy focus the PRC has demonstrated a growing interest in SLOC protection, while at the same time promoting territorial claims in the region and through a unique interpretation of the EEZ has attempted to create a defence buffer zone around its coastline. Additionally it has

²⁸ Office of the Secretary for Defense (2011). *Annual Report to Congress Military and Security Developments Involving the People's Republic of China 2011*. Department of Defense: Washington D.C. 58

²⁹ Office of Naval Intelligence (2009). 7-8

³⁰ Office of the Secretary of Defense (2011). 58

³¹ Office of Naval Intelligence (2009). 9

³² Office of the Secretary for Defense (2011). 57

demonstrated greater assertiveness in forwarding its territorial claims in the East and South China Seas.

| PLAN | 1990 | 1995 | 2000 | 2005 | 2010 |
|---------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| SUBMARINES | | | | | |
| SSBN | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 3 |
| SSN | 4 | 5 | 5 | 5 | 6 |
| SSK | 87 | 44 | 57 | 61 | 54 |
| SSG | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 1 |
| SURFACE COMBATANTS | | | | | |
| DDG | 18 | 18 | 20 | 21 | 28 |
| FFG | 37 | 32 | 35 | 42 | 52 |
| PFM | | | 93 | 96 | 83 |
| MCMV | | | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| LPD | | | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| AORH | | | 0 | 0 | 5 |

TABLE 3.3: PLAN Platform Numbers and development, 1990-2010 Figures from: IISS, The Military Balance.

The PLAN has as a result of these developments shifted its approach towards improving the quality of its naval forces. The success of such a shift is a matter of debate; however the addition of 12 new Kilo class submarines alongside developing indigenous submarine platforms has greatly improved its offensive and defensive capabilities. Additionally, it has invested heavily in purchasing larger surface platforms in order to pursue its agenda of extending its operational range and capabilities. It now has long range AAW capability across a number of platforms and while ASW may have been to some extent ignored, its surface warfare capability has increased significantly, with the addition of long range cruise missiles and importantly over the horizon targeting capabilities.³³ More significantly, as a demonstration of its changing role is the development of at sea replenishment capability and the commitment to procure LPD of which 2 were in service as of 2011 and aircraft carriers one of which began sea trials in 2011 (this is a refurbished Soviet aircraft carrier) and further indigenous platforms are planned.

³³ Office of Naval Intelligence (2009). 9

What must be noted is that the PLAN's development as with the more normalised stance of the JMSDF is a key factor in how the ROKN view themselves and their own naval power. While the argument over how contentious naval development is in the region in terms of its potential to destabilise maritime security is a matter of debate in political and academic circles, as will be shown the reality for the ROKN is that the naval development of both countries is something to be hedged against and in terms of capabilities sometimes replicated.

III.III THE ROK & THE MARITIME SPHERE

The ROK has not been isolated from the developments in East and Northeast Asia. Sandwiched between Japan and the PRC and a geographic nexus in Northeast Asia, it has great strategic value in separating the two powers and in an age of growing and competing regional maritime interests together with increasingly intractable territorial disputes, the value and possession of its maritime territory is becoming increasingly important. With a coastline of 1,667 Km and a maritime jurisdiction approximately 3.5 times that of its land area at 308,480km², the ROK has considerable interest in maintaining its maritime territorial claims.³⁴ With the promulgation of the Territorial Sea and Contiguous Zone Act in 1977 (amended in 1995 and 2011), the ROK declared a territorial sea limit of 12nm and a contiguous zone of 24 nm.³⁵ In addition with the passing of the 1996 Exclusive Economic

³⁴ ROKN Headquarters (2008). *2008 Naval Policy Report* <2008년도 해군정책 보고서>. Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 10

³⁵ Under Secretary of Defense for Policy (2005). *Maritime Claims Reference Manual*. DoD 2005.1-m.349 Retrieved from USN Judge Advocate General's website: www.jag.navy.mil/organization/documents/mcrm/korea_south.pdf

Zone act in 1996 a 200nm EEZ was declared.³⁶ Within these territorial and economic areas, the ROK has, as shown below, significant economic interests which has given the integrity of these zones heightened importance.

In line with the developing maritime interest in Asia as a whole, the ROK has had an increasing interaction with the maritime sphere. This began in the 1960s and 70s when under the rule of Park, Chung-hee the ROK underwent a series of 5 year industrialisation plans, central to which was the development of a Heavy Chemical Industry (HCI).³⁷ As part of this drive for economic growth the shipbuilding industry was identified as an area for development. As such the government assisted private industry namely Hyundai Heavy Industries with developing shipyards (in 1973 HHI constructed the world's largest dockyards) and providing the company with subsidies, transportation contracts and preferential access to the country's steel.³⁸ This has resulted in the ROK's shipbuilding industry undergoing a period of substantial growth and consolidation over the past 30 years. Seven of the world's top ten shipbuilding companies are from the ROK and the ROK is among the world's top three shipbuilders, surpassing Japan in 2006 and exchanging the honour with the PRC in 2010 and 2012.³⁹

As the shipbuilding industry developed into a world leader so has the economy of the ROK. With a focus on manufacturing and exports the ROK has shown sometimes spectacular

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Kim, Y H (2004). *Korea's Development under Park Chung-hee: Rapid Industrialization 1961-1979*. London: Routledge Curzon. 173

³⁸ Shin, K.H. and Paul S. Cicanntell (2009). The Steel and Shipbuilding Industries of South Korea: Rising East Asia and Globalisation. *American Sociological Association*. XV.2 167-192. 181

³⁹ Arirang News (2012). *7 Out of the World's Top Ten Shipyards in Korea*. Retrieved from the Arirang News website : http://www.arirang.co.kr/News/News_View.asp?nseq=125261&code=Ne4&category=3

growth in its GDP and trade volumes and as a result is currently a member of the G20. What is important in relation to the maritime sphere is that with its export based economy over 99.7% of its export freight containers are moved by the sea and as of 1998 these sea based imports and exports accounted for 64.5% of the ROK's GDP.⁴⁰ This is reflected in the fact that the ROK has the world's 5th largest container port at Busan in the southeast of the country and controls the world's 5th merchant fleet.⁴¹ As can be seen in Table 3.4 the economic importance of access to the sea is fundamental to the growth of the ROK, this is shown in the large of investment that has been put in place by indigenous ROK companies in shipbuilding and ownership and while this is vital to the economic state of the county the sea is also a lifeline to support this economy and its population.

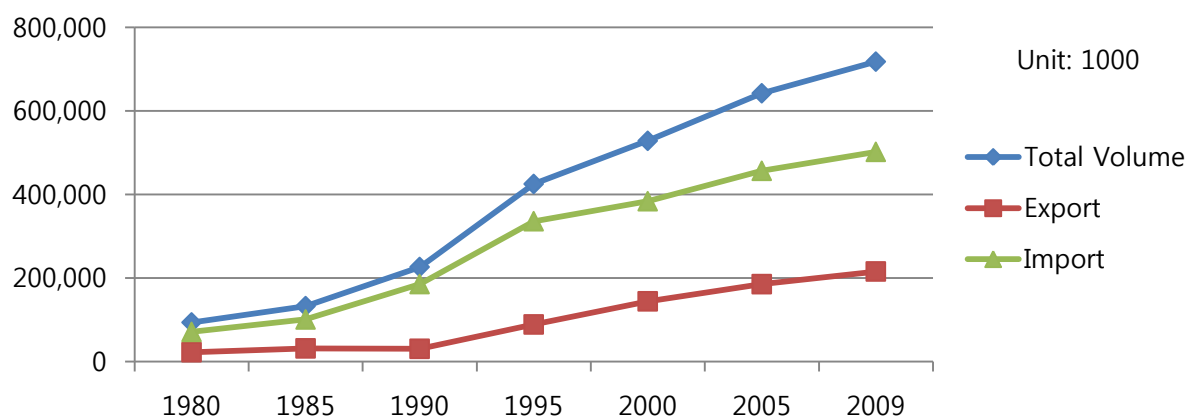


TABLE 3.4: Korean Seaborne Trade Volume (on Korean Flagged Ships). Retrieved from Korean Ship owners Association website http://www.shipowners.or.kr/main_e.php?mm=s21

The ROK suffers from a dearth of natural resources which has meant that in order for it to prosper it is required to import its energy and mineral requirements (see Table 3.5), additionally as the country moved away from a subsistence agrarian economy the need to

⁴⁰ Ministry of Land Transport & Maritime Affairs (MLTM). *MLTM Brochure*. Gwacheon:MLTM. 19. Retrieved from MLTM website: <http://english.mltm.go.kr/ebook/4/1/546/EBook.htm>

⁴¹ Ibid.

import food stuffs has grown. The ROK is the world's 5th largest importer of crude oil, 3rd of largest of coal and 2nd largest of LNG, all of which come via the sea and the majority from the Middle East.⁴² Indeed the ROK imports 100% of its crude oil and 90% of the raw materials needed to maintain a developing manufacturing economy, also it brings in 73% of its food requirements and as Table 3.6 shows, this reliance on imports has grown hugely since the 1980s.⁴³ What these figures suggest is that the ROK as it evolves has grown increasingly reliant on the sea to both sustain and develop the country, and as such it is medium which importance has heightened as the country's economy has developed.

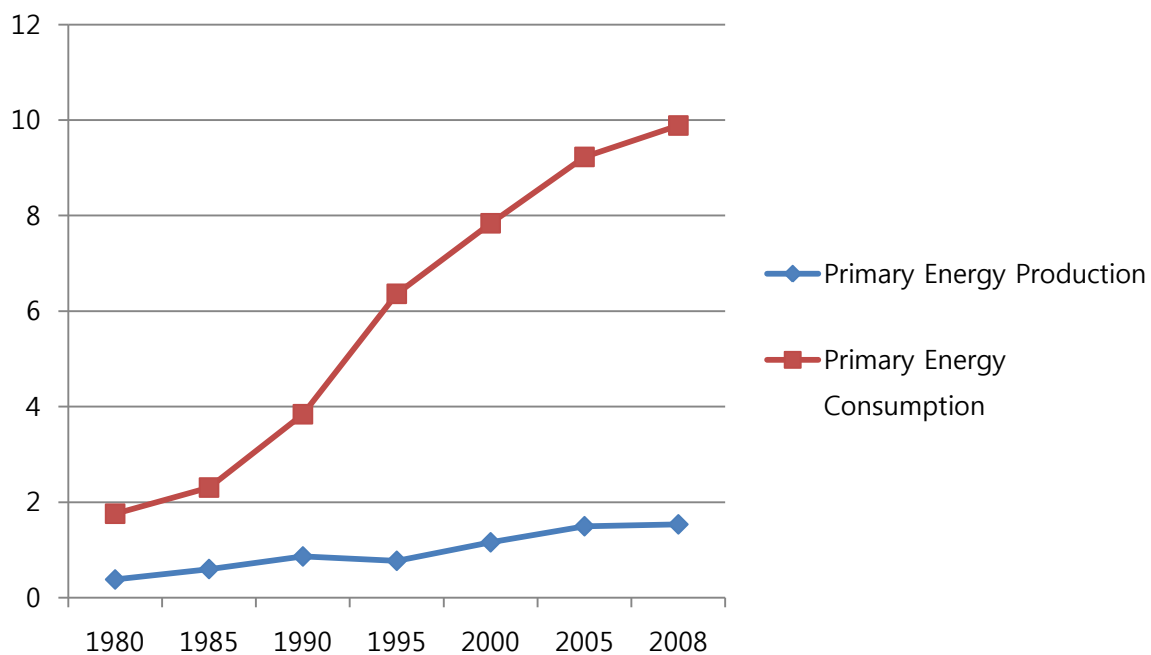


TABLE 3.5: Primary energy consumption and production. Retrieved from EIA website
<http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=KS&trk=p1#tpe>

⁴² US Energy Information Administration (2011/November) Korea South. Retrieved from EIA website: <http://eia.gov/countries/cab.cfm?fips=KS>

⁴³ McDevitt M. (2007) *Workshop Report: "The Future of ROK Navy-US Navy Cooperation*. Alexandria: Centre for Naval Analysis. 3

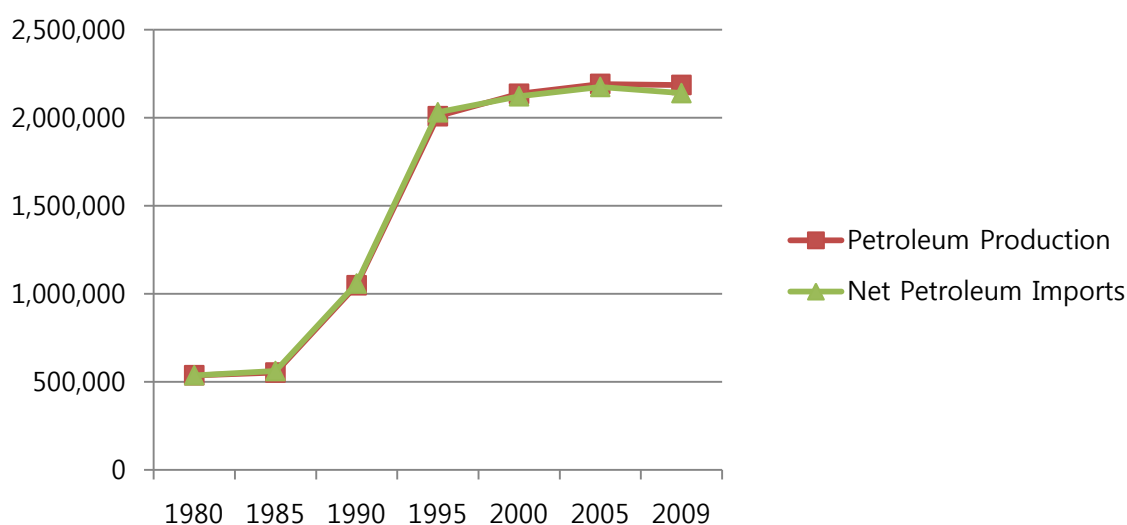


TABLE 3.6: Petroleum Consumption and Imports. Retrieved from EIA website
<http://www.eia.gov/countries/country-data.cfm?fips=KS&trk=p1#pet>

The importance of the ROK's sea links has increased the focus on the country's relationship with the maritime sphere, this commercial interaction has grown alongside a second strand of maritime commerce one which is of increasing interest to the ROK; maritime resource exploitation. This has always been important within the context of ROK fisheries as the seas around the peninsula are rich fishing grounds and although fisheries only account for approximately 1% of the country's GDP they are important as local demand for seafood increases and fish stocks both locally and regionally deplete.⁴⁴ A second area of resource exploitation that is undergoing development is the exploitation of undersea mineral and energy deposits. While the country's lack of natural resources is a fundamental problem, cost and the technological limitations of mineral and energy extraction prevented sustained attempts to exploit this potentially lucrative area. However, as the country's economic power grew in combination with developments in exploration technology the ROK through a

⁴⁴ Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations (2012). *Fishery and Aquaculture Profiles Republic of Korea*. Retrieved from Food and Agriculture Organisation website: www.fao.org/fishery/countrysector/Fl-CP_KR/en

state owned venture the Korea National Oil Corporation (KNOC) began mapping and exploring potential oil and gas deposits in the East, West and South Seas, opening its first natural gas field in East Sea which started production in 2004.⁴⁵ There is also hope that oil and mineral deposits will be discovered around the Jeju Basin in the South Sea.⁴⁶ While not hopeful of any sort of energy independence, the fact exploration has taken place emphasises the country's growing maritime priorities. The sea has become vital to the ROK as an engine of growth, a medium for development and a pillar on which state survival rests.

III.IV SECURITY ISSUES AND PERCEPTIONS:

It would be logical to extrapolate from the ROK's economic reliance on the sea, its growing interest in undersea resources and its de-facto island status that the country has always taken a securitised view of the ocean. However the reality is somewhat different, in order to explain this one must understand that traditionally the ROK's defence policy has focused on the DPRK and was heavily intertwined with the US and its military. As a result the ROKN has developed with an operational orientation almost exclusively aimed at countering the capabilities of the KPN and other DPRK maritime agencies. Whilst they have also had stated roles of protecting maritime sovereignty and the country's fishing and economic exploitation grounds these have been done with forces very much designed with littoral warfare in mind and such operations were somewhat secondary to the principle mission of deterrence.

⁴⁵ Korea National Oil Company (2012, March) *Operations E&P Worldwide Korea*. Retrieved from Korea National Oil Company website: www.knoc.co.kr/ENG/sub03/sub03114.jsp

⁴⁶ Ibid.

This is not to say that the ROKN's view of operations remained static, as will be shown they often reacted to match KPN developments through procuring new platforms and weapons systems however a wider appreciation of the ROK's maritime security which was to a large extent guaranteed by the US was not in the minds of government officials or even naval planners. Importantly, as the country's sense of independence grew alongside its economy and reliance on the sea as a medium of economic survival a greater appreciation of maritime security developed firstly within the ROKN and then latterly in the democratic governments of the 1990s and 2000s. This was driven by the complex interaction of the ROK's ever developing regional and global maritime presence, its increasing reliance on the sea and the geo-strategic realities of the post-cold war environment. Thus in order to analyse the ROKN's development, the ROK's threat perceptions must be outlined and then matched to the current and proposed roles of the ROKN, the level of dedication to the littoral in comparison to regional operations is a key question in understanding the nature of ROKN modernisation and as will be demonstrated attaining such a balance of forces during periods of procurement was a key requirement to meet operational objectives.

1) ASSESSING THE THREAT AND OPERATIONAL PRIORITIES.

While in the past the ROK almost exclusively focused on the threat from the DPRK, following the end of the Cold War and the rapid expansion of the ROK economy the country's view of what constituted a threat began to change. While the need to retain an operational focus on the DPRK remained the ROK became increasingly aware of the situation surrounding the peninsula and the need to ensure the country's safety not only in a peninsular but in a regional context. This can be seen in the following 1996 excerpt by a senior ROK civil servant

who while writing about Northeast Asia and the post-Cold War environment and despite being relatively positive about the future of the region stated:

'This is not to say that there are no uncertainties threatening the relations among the major powers. There can be doubts about the durability of the US security commitment, China's future intentions and Japan's future military role. Since Korea has been historically a victim of struggles among the powers for dominance in the region, a stable equilibrium among the powers in the region is essential for the survival and prosperity of Korea'.⁴⁷

This view is further reflected in the 2009 writings of ROK defence minister who stated:

'While interdependency among nations has increased through greater cooperation economic cooperation and exchange, there still are many potential causes for conflict such as history recognition, territoriality and competition for resources'.⁴⁸

While these two statements were written almost 12 years apart they demonstrate a consistent ROK perception of regional security one that as shown in Figure 3.1 is mirrored in successive MND Defense White Papers in which there is an emphasis on the role of history and its impact on specific regional disputes regarding territory and resources as areas of potential instability and a threat to the region and by extension the ROK.

While in general acknowledging a developing regional economic interdependence and the potential this has to resolve disputes, the MND identified regional competition and uncertainty between Japan, the PRC and the US as areas of concern. The growth of the

⁴⁷ Park, S H. (1996). Korea's Security Policy. *Institute for Foreign Affairs and National Security Review*. 4:3. 7

⁴⁸ Lee, S-H (2009). Korea's Role in Global Security Defence Policy in Times of Uncertainty. *Military Technology*, Vol.10.2009. 12

PRC's regional aspirations and its military capability combined with an increasingly 'normalised Japan' whose military role is deemed uncertain given its historical relationship with rest of Asia in combination with the potential reaction of the US and its allies to the rise of a more assertive PRC all expose the ROK to potential risk. This is a view that is underwritten by the ROK's own view of its history where the actions of the great powers surrounding it often left Korea exposed to manipulation and control often to its detriment. Thus maintaining a military powerful enough to counter not only the DPRK but future regional developments is a logical response to this altered threat perception.

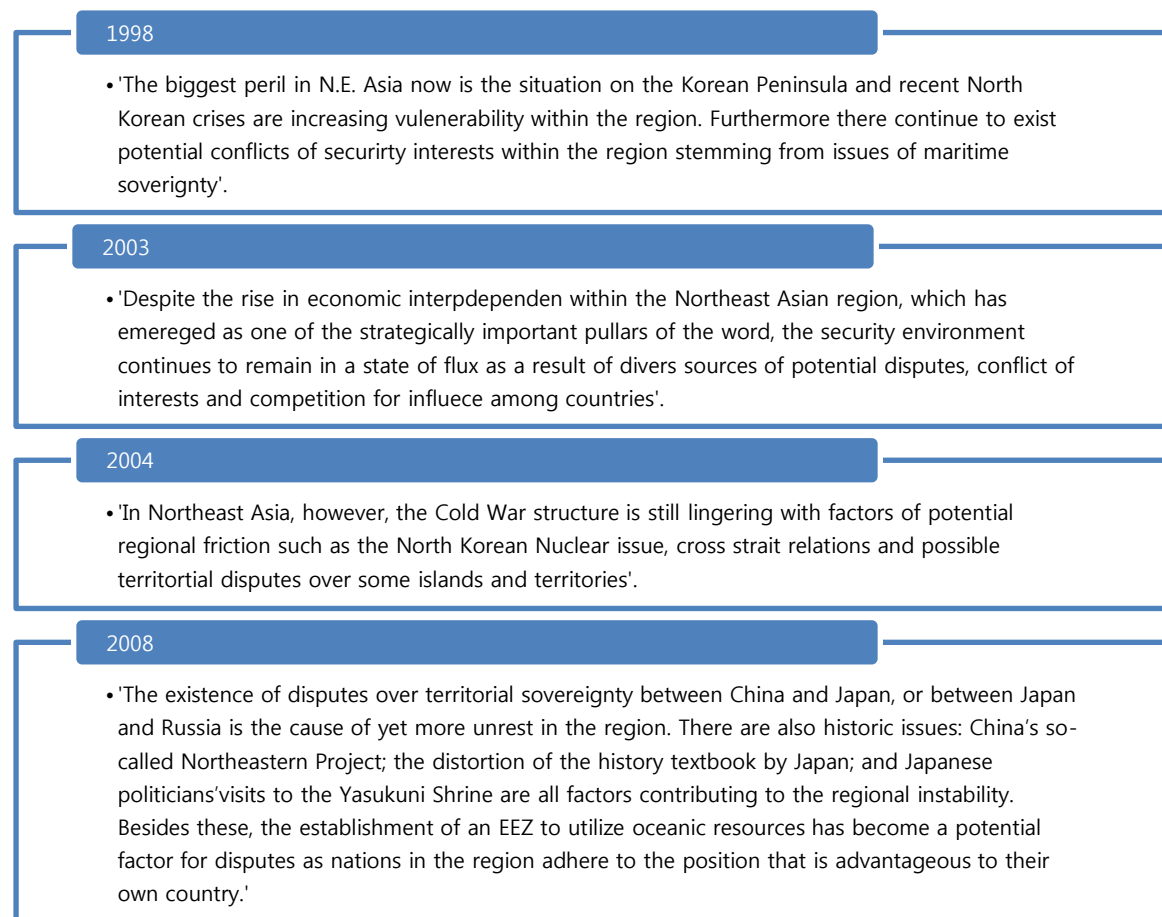


Figure 3.1 MND Defense White Paper quotes on the security situation in East Asia. Taken from: MND (1999). 1998 Defense White Paper. Seoul: MND. 25; MND (2003). 2003 Defense White Paper. Seoul: MND. 22-23 ; MND (2004). 2004 Defense White Paper. Seoul: MND. 16 & MND (2008). 2008 Defense White Paper. Seoul: MND. 17

Table 3.7 provides a greater breakdown the array of security concerns that the ROK have repeatedly referred to and what is of note is the overwhelming maritime nature of the threats mentioned. Territorial disputes, EEZ disputes, energy competition and increasing military capabilities all directly affect the ROK especially in the maritime theatre while the rest have the potential to destabilise the region. Thus while in the land theatre and the threat from the DPRK remains a major factor in ROK thinking the regional environment has become a consistent issue in future security planning. The question remains however how this effects the threat perceptions and operations of the ROKN.

| AREA OF DISPUTE | 1996 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2003 | 2004 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Territorial Disputes | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Taiwan | | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ | √ |
| Boundary Demarcation (EEZ) | √ | √ | | | | √ | | √ | √ | √ |
| Theatre Missile Defense | | | | √ | √ | √ | | | | |
| Increasing Regional Military Capabilities | √ | √ | √ | √ | | √ | √ | √ | | √ |
| Energy Competition | | √ | | | | | | | √ | √ |

TABLE 3.7: Perceived Regional Threats by Defense White Paper: Information from ROK MND Defense White Papers 1996, 1998, 1999, 2000, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010; ROK MND Defense Data and Statistics 2001 & Participatory Government Defense Policy 2003.

The ROKN is required to translate the regional security environment as seen by the MND into a threat assessment and set of operational priorities. In examining Figure 3.2 what is

evident is the many of the threats as seen by the ROKN are the same as those of the MND and wider ROK defence establishment. The reality is that the majority of future threats are in the maritime sphere or at a distance from the ROK to be under the purview of the ROKN. Thus the ROKN has an operational dilemma in maintaining deterrence operations in what is a littoral environment whilst at the same time recognising and responding to the multitude of threats to the ROK's maritime sovereignty and secure use of the sea. A key point is judging to what extent modernisation was driven by this altered threat perception and did this alter the focus on the DPRK?

Military



NON MILITARY

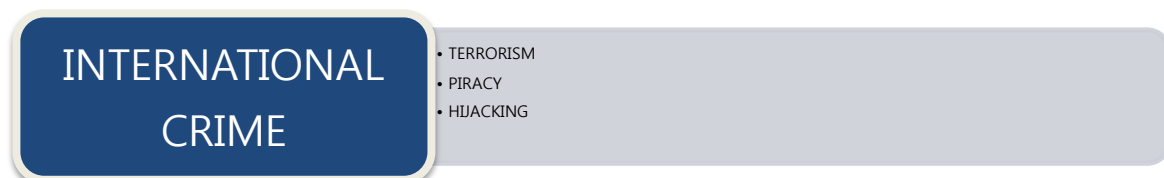


FIGURE 3.2: Perceived Threats to ROKN Maritime Interests in the Asian Region. Taken from: ROKN (2011) *As Anyone Can Know! Look Inside Naval Operations* <누구나 알 수 있는! 해군작전 들여다보기>, Seoul: ROKN. 12 & ROKN Headquarters (2008) 2008 Naval Policy Report <2008 년도 해군정책 보고서> Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 1

Recognising such this operational dilemma was Admiral An Byeong tae who stated that the ROKN *'should be looking for two kinds of situation, firstly we should be ready for North Korea and second we need to protect our SLOC and also [sic] from other countries',*⁴⁹

Thus ROK operations must be viewed on two levels the threat from the DRPK and the operational requirements needed to counter it and responding to the newly perceived threats to the ROK's maritime security. While much MND and even ROKN documentation continues to split the threats into peninsular and future, the reality is the ROKN must plan to meet both operational needs concurrently.

An initial proposal for dealing with this split operational need was contained in 'Navy Vision 2020' which was a document stating the future requirements of the ROKN by the year 2020. This was predicated on the concept of a unified Korea and how the sea would become the frontline in Korean after the land threat was settled. The document describes how the larger, technologically advanced platforms needed for regional operations could be used to *'suppress DPRK provocation and deal with the navy's role after unification'*.⁵⁰ This suggests that the ROKN was not looking to wait for unification to undergo modernisation but was acknowledging the need to modernise as soon as possible to face future threats while the priority was maintaining deterrence on the peninsula. The follow up to Navy Vision 2020, Navy Vision 2030 is more circumspect about the possibilities of unification and under its conception of the future roles of the ROKN, there is a dual focus, the first part looks at the DPRK and states that the ROKN

⁴⁹ Author conducted interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae

⁵⁰ ROKN Headquarters (1999). Navy Vision 2020 <해군비전 2020>. Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 91-92

must focus on strengthening deterrence with the use of a strong navy to ensure peace and if necessary ensure victory in war time through '*sea power and power projection*'.⁵¹ The second part deals with '*defending sovereignty and the national interest...in the ocean*' and '*contributing to regional and world peace*'.⁵² Thus there is an acknowledgement within the ROKN of need to ensure the primacy of operations against the DPRK, while at the same time having and developing capabilities to cope with missions as the ROK's maritime interests grow and the region becomes more potentially unstable.⁵³

While these two documents confirm the ROKN's acknowledgement of the need to face both littoral and regional operations it is necessary to go further and examine how this threat perception and mission focus translate in operations. Three central operational roles are clearly identifiable. The first is the maintenance of deterrence and the ability to react to situations around the peninsula including all out war. The second is maintaining control over the ROK's maritime territory; this is closely linked with having enough naval power to combat that of its larger regional rivals and protect the ROK from external influence. Finally the third significant mission is SLOC protection, while this always been a mission to some extent as near SLOC protection has always been part of the ROKN's missions in relation to the DPRK, regional SLOC is increasingly seen as a vital mission to protect trade and ensure that the ROK can independently handle regional instability. The key question arising from these three missions is one of operational priority.

⁵¹ ROKN Headquarters (2008). Navy Vision 2030 <해군비전 2030>. Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 15

⁵² Ibid. 16

⁵³ Author conducted interview with Admiral Song, Keun-ho

2) THE DPRK: A TRADITIONAL YET EVOLVING VIEW

The ROKN in the context of peninsular security has had a largely subordinate role in what is an overwhelmingly land oriented theatre. A consequence of this is the ROKN having a naval strategy that has been limited to peninsular defence, the maintenance of deterrence and the protection of ROK sovereignty. What this resulted in was a procurement and force improvement policy that almost exclusively reacted to the capabilities of the KPN and a resultant operational imperative of remaining in the littoral focused on the north.

The question to be asked in the period under examination is, has the ROKN's focus on this traditional mission been lessened by its desire to expand its operational set and the perceived need to protect the ROK's growing maritime interests? Also have force procurement plans ignored the realities of peninsular security in favour of focusing on large platforms and future security threats?

In order to find this answer, one must first examine the threat posed by the KPN. As force similar in many ways to the ROKN, e.g. subordinate to and considerably smaller than its land based service rival and in many ways responsible for a very limited set of operations, the KPN poses a very specific threat to the ROK and presents a number of unique challenges to the ROKN. With approximately 46,000 active duty sailors and large number of sub-surface vessels, the KPN's operational posture is an aggressive one with the ROK MND estimating that over 60 percent of its vessels are forward deployed. While its war-time missions include short-term amphibious and fire support operations, sea denial operations through submarines and mine warfare and the interdiction of coastal shipping, it is the

KPN's peacetime activities and capabilities that have been and remain the true focus of the ROKN. The primary peacetime missions of the KPN include defence of the littoral and port areas of the North, it also tasked with SOF insertion, fishery protection and surveillance.⁵⁴ It has increasingly come into conflict with ROKN forces as the DPRK leadership looks to assert their own territorial claims or raise the tension on peninsula for economic or political gain. As Table 3.8 demonstrates the KPN or other quasi-naval DPRK organisations have been used repeatedly to perform infiltration operations on all three sides of ROK territory and have consistently violated the ROK's maritime jurisdiction. This sort of action has forced the ROKN in deploying the majority of its forces on a geographic basis with a number of platforms continuously operating at sea maintaining patrol coverage. The nature of such operations also demonstrates a degree of success for the ROKN as over time it is apparent that infiltration operations reduced and those wider KPN operations narrowed especially after the 1980s to focus on the NLL. As such this area on the West Coast of the peninsula has become a crucible of sorts for recent DPRK violations and provocation and consequent ROK reactions and is now symbolic of the ROKN-KPN dynamic.

| TIME | EVENT | WHERE |
|------------|---|----------------------|
| 01/1968 | Seizure of the US spy ship USS Pueblo | International Waters |
| 10-11/1968 | Penetration by 120-130 DPRK commandos of ROK mainland | East Coast |
| 06/ 1969 | DPRK agents found infiltration Huksan-do | West Coast |
| 06/ 1970 | KPN patrol boats capture ROK broadcast vessel | West Coast |
| 02/1974 | DPRK sinks two ROK fishing vessels | International Waters |
| 06/1981 | DPRK spy vessel sunk by ROKN near Chungchong-do | West Coast |
| 05/1982 | 2 DPRK infiltrators discovered | East Coast |
| 10/1985 | DPRK spy vessel sunk by ROKN off Busan | East Coast |
| 01/1987 | ROK fishing vessel seized by DPRK | International Waters |
| 05/1995 | KPN patrol boat fired on ROK fishing vessel | West Coast |

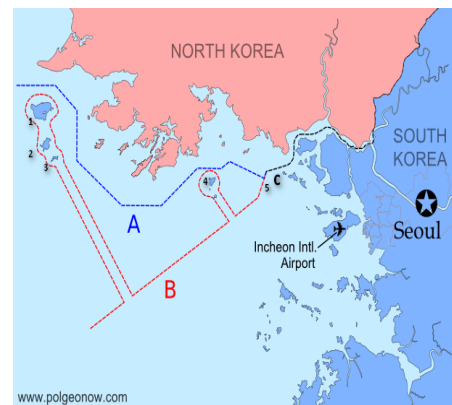
⁵⁴ Ibid.

| | | |
|------------|--|------------------|
| 08/1995 | DPRK shore battery opens fire on ROKN vessel | West Coast (NLL) |
| 05-06/1996 | KPN patrol craft cross NLL on multiple occasions, withdraw after standoff with ROKN | West Coast (NLL) |
| 09/1996 | KPN submarine infiltration of ROK territory | East Coast |
| 06/1997 | 3 KPN vessels cross NLL and open fire on ROKN | West Coast (NLL) |
| 06/1998 | KPN midget submarine seized near Sokcho | East Coast |
| 11/1998 | KPN high-speed vessel escaped ROKN pursuit | West Coast |
| 12/1998 | ROKN sunk KPN semi-submersible | South Coast |
| 06/1999 | First Battle of Yeonpyeong. | West Coast (NLL) |
| 02-04/2001 | DPRK fishing vessels escorted by KPN cross NLL. Turn back after standoff with ROKN | West Coast (NLL) |
| 05/2001 | Multiple incidents of KPN vessels crossing NLL to chase PRC fishing vessels illegally operating in DPRK waters | West Coast (NLL) |
| 06/2001 | 3 DPRK Cargo vessels cross NLL | West Coast (NLL) |
| 07/2001 | KPN vessel violates NLL, turns back after challenge by ROKN | West Coast (NLL) |
| 11/2001 | KPN vessel violates NLL, turns back after challenge by ROKN | West Coast (NLL) |
| 01/2001 | KPN vessel violates NLL, turns back after challenge by ROKN | West Coast (NLL) |
| 06/2002 | Second Battle of Yeonpyeong | West Coast (NLL) |
| 08/2003 | KPN vessel violates NLL, turns back after warning shots by ROKN | West Coast (NLL) |
| 11/2003 | KPN vessel violates NLL, turns back after warning shots by ROKN | West Coast (NLL) |
| 10/2009 | Battle of Daechong | West Coast (NLL) |
| 03/2010 | Sinking of Cheonan | West Coast (NLL) |
| 10/2010 | Shelling of Yeonpyeong-do | West Coast (NLL) |

Table 3.8 List of significant naval actions in ROKN waters Retrieved from: Office of the Korea Chair (2010). Record of North Korea's Major Conventional Provocations since 1960s. Washington D.C.: Centre for Strategic & International Studies; Congressional Research Service (2007). North Korean Provocative Actions, 1950-2007. Washington D.C.: CRS

The reasons why the DPRK have chosen to focus on the NLL and use it as an arena for provoking the ROK are beyond the purview of this paper but what is clear is that the NLL as the DPRK has focused its operations in the area has become increasingly important not only to the ROKN but to the ROK also. This line was unilaterally declared by the UNC in 1953 and is a tacit extension of the Military Demarcation Line which separated the two sides on land. As Figure 3.3 shows the line is not a natural extension of the MDL but follows the DPRK coast

north mainly to protect ROK controlled islands that lie close to DPRK territory. The line however is not recognised by the DPRK who have periodically protested its use and have put forward their own boundary claim which is a virtual extension of the MDL. Tensions along



this line have risen periodically but since the 1990s as Table 3.9 demonstrates the number of violations has risen significantly by both commercial and military vessels.

FIGURE 3.3 Map of Area Surrounding NII. Taken from: www.polgeonow.com with author's additions.

- 1. Baengnyeong-do
 - 2. Daechong-do
 - 3. Socheong-do
 - 4. Yeonpyeong-do
 - 5. U-do
- A. NLL
B. DPRK NLL
C. MDL

| TYPE | TOTAL | 1950s | 1960s | 1970s | 1980s | 1990s | 2000s | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 |
|---|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|------|------|------|
| Intrusion of ROK Territory by Sea | 1001 | 292 | 472 | 172 | 24 | 41 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| KPN Patrol Boat Violation of NLL | 253 | 0 | 0 | 22 | 11 | 101 | 110 | 2 | 5 | 2 |
| DPRK Fishing Vessel Violation of NLL | 149 | 0 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 3 | 115 | 2 | 12 | 14 |
| Artillery and Small Scale Naval Clashes | 38 | 1 | 18 | 2 | 0 | 11 | 2 | 3 | 1 | 0 |

TABLE 3.9: DPRK Violation of ROK Territory and NLL at Sea. Information taken from MND (2012). 2012 Defense White Paper. Seoul: MND. 306

The operational environment is quite complex presenting operational challenges in terms of the geography of the region with a multitude of inlets and bays and relatively shallow waters which make the detection of both submarines and surface vessels complex. In

addition to this geographic complexity is the economic value of the area in that rich blue crab fishing grounds cross the NLL and fishing methods have frequently resulted in DPRK vessels crossing the NLL in pursuit of their catch. An issue which adds further complexity to the situation is the presence of PRC fishermen, illegally entering both ROK and DPRK waters to exploit these fishing grounds thus for the ROKN this military matter is complicated by the need to enforce the law and prevent illegal activity from raising tensions in the region.⁵⁵

| MILITARY VALUE | POLITICAL VALUE | ECONOMIC VALUE |
|---|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MONITOR THE DPRK'S WEST SEA FLEET • BLOCK STRATEGIC POINT • FORWARD SEABASE FOR THE DETECTION AND MONITORING OF MILITARY ACTIVITIES • NLL ALLOWS FOR THE DEFENCE OF THE 5 NORTHWEST ISLANDS AND THE COASTAL CITIES IN THE REGION | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • THE DUTY OF THE STATE TO PROTECT THE LIVES AND PROPERTY OF THE RESIDENTS OF THE NORTHWEST ISLANDS • PROTECT THE ROK'S EEZ • REPEL DPRK INTRUSION OF NLL AND SO MAINTAIN THE ROK'S MARITIME BORDERS | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LARGE AMOUNT OF UNDERSEA AQUATIC LIFE • THE 'MIRACLE OF THE HAN' IS RELIANT ON A STABLE WEST COAST AND YELLOW SEA • PROTECT SLOC |

Figure 3.4: Military, Political and Economic importance of the NLL. Taken from: ROKN (2011) *As Anyone Can Know! Look Inside Naval Operations* <누구나 알 수 있는! 해군작전 들여다보기>, Seoul: ROKN. 54

The importance of the NLL as shown in Figure 3.4 suggests a strategic vitality to the area that makes its status extremely important for the ROK, its economy and national prestige.

The strategic importance of the area is that it acts as a barrier to protect the West coast of

⁵⁵ The extent of the problem of illegal PRC fishing was revealed in one newspaper article, quoting a ROK military official who stated that in 2012 over 450 PRC fishing vessels operated in and around the NLL every day. The need for the ROKN and the KPN to counter this has resulted in KPN vessels crossing the NLL to chase PRC boats away from DPRK territory. See: The Korea Times (2012). 'Chinese fishing boats still catching crabs near tense inter-Korea border'. Retrieved from http://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/news/nation/2013/02/120_121112.html

the ROK and importantly the metropolitan areas of Incheon and Seoul thus protecting the most populous part of the ROK and one of its economic hubs. It also acts as a buffer between the DPRK and the 5 Northwest Islands the status of which is extremely important to the ROK and while their control of the islands has not been officially opposed by the DPRK, one island Yeonpyeong-do came under artillery attack in 2010 and all of the islands and coastal areas close to the NLL are vulnerable to DPRK attack. As Figure 3.3 demonstrates the proximity of the NLL and the 5 islands to the DPRK presents an operational imperative of maintaining a constant presence in the area prepared to combat DPRK violations.

Such an imperative has been demonstrated in the naval clashes which have occurred around the NLL and have had two operational effects for the ROKN; the first three which occurred in 1999, 2002 and 2009 were all surface clashes and ended in significant victories for the ROKN demonstrating the superiority of their training and platforms in relation to the KPN.⁵⁶ At the same time these clashes highlighted some significant problems with the ROKN's own patrol forces and rules of engagement. As a result many of the lessons learned were employed in the development of a new class of patrol boat currently under construction. This is significant in that it demonstrates a sustained reaction to DPRK actions and capabilities by the ROKN both in adjusting tactics and developing new platforms to ensure even greater superiority over the KPN. This is an especially important point to note given that two of these clashes occurred during the height of what could be classified as the blue water construction period providing demonstrable evidence that ROKN retained focus on

⁵⁶ Bechtol Jr., B (2001). Who is Stronger? A Comparative Analysis on the Readiness and Capabilities of the North and South Korean Militaries. *International Journal of Korean Unification Studies*, 10 (2). 1-26. 15

operations on the NLL and that the mission of deterrence and ensuring that the ROK's security remained paramount in their operational thinking.

Indeed the theme of responding to developments in KPN technology and operational posture is consistent throughout the period in question. Indicative of this has been the reaction to the growth in KPN amphibious capability; they possess around 250 assorted amphibious platforms many of which are designed to insert small numbers of troops at high speeds into ROK areas. Among the most significant are the many variants of hovercraft capable of transporting 40-50 troops at 50 knots. About 130-150 of these vessels are in service, built in the 1980's they have greatly added to the KPN's amphibious capability considering their ability to enter the mudflats on the west coast of the ROK and infiltrate rear areas during hostilities.⁵⁷ Their presence of these high-speed vessels altered the nature of the threat posed by the DPRK and increased vulnerability of the islands around NLL and the area surrounding the Han estuary to surprise amphibious assault. As a result many of the platforms developed by the ROKN such as the KDX-III & II and the *Dokdo* with its proposed attendant helicopters were designed in part to counter this threat of a swarm attack. Demonstrating that the ROKN had planned to use platforms that were ostensibly part of the blue water element in operations against the DPRK.

There is no significant evidence that the ROKN allowed any form expanded regional operations or procurement to impact their ability to counter the KPN and as will be shown in Chapter 4 the maintenance of the three fleet commands which are specifically tasked

⁵⁷ Bermudez, J S. (1994). 108

with deterrence and the assignment of the majority of surface platforms to these fleets confirms the fact that deterrence and anti-DPRK operations remain the primary focus of the ROKN and that much of their procurement was aimed not just at regional operations but at developing platforms, some of which were specifically designed for the littoral and others with multi-functional capacity to have an operational benefit to the ROKN within the context of the NLL, the DPRK and the mission of deterrence.

3) THE ROK AND KOREAN WATERS

Apart from the threat of the DPRK but of particular concern to the ROK is the protection of its maritime jurisdiction. These concerns centre on the ROK's ability to defend its claims to maritime territory made under UNCLOS. The area of conflict within these zones surround the geography of the Northeast Asian Maritime Region, where narrow seas and territorial disputes combined with the relative ambiguity of the UNCLOS provisions have meant that the ROK, Japan and the PRC have conflicting territorial and economic claims in the region. These issues have prevented the permanent setting of EEZ and as an economic imperative combined with expressions national identity have become a source of tension between the three nations and as such is a growing security issue for the ROK in terms of the defence of their territorial integrity and economic rights. They are also driven by the fear of being unable to defend their maritime interests against aggressive actions by their more powerful neighbours, and as such the development of a more capable naval force must be seen as in part a response to this issue, thus not a regional interest but one of a non-traditional (i.e. Non-DPRK) operational capability focused on the 200nm EEZ surrounding ROK territory.

An example of this was in the late 1980s to early 1990s when the commander of the Second Fleet was forced into responding to approach of a PRC destroyer to ROK drilling operations in the West Sea. Although the PRC vessel of approximately 4000 tons turned back the ROKN did not possess a force option powerful enough to properly deter such encroachment. Thus combating this element and developing capabilities matching those of the country's neighbours was a significant factor in the modernisation and reinforcement of the ROKN.⁵⁸ The influence of history is also apparent in this issue, as Admiral Song, Young-moo stated at his CNO inauguration address in 2007 *'Hereupon, the Republic of Korea Navy must transform itself into a core force that secures the nation and maintains the Northeast Asia [sic] and world peace in order not to repeat our dark history by perfectly protecting our territorial waters'*.⁵⁹ What is apparent is an ROKN placing itself and its development firmly within context of ensuring that the ROK's past vulnerabilities would not exposed again and that its own sovereignty would be protected despite its relatively small size in comparison to its neighbours.

There is a secondary point that arises from this; the ROKN recognises its inherent weaknesses in terms of size and national power in comparison with the countries surrounding the peninsula. As Admiral An stated the ROKN does not need a navy to challenge the surrounding powers but one that *'if the situation allowed [sic] I think we [the ROKN] should be big enough to be counted by them'*.⁶⁰ Something that is also demonstrated in Naval Vision 2020 which acknowledges that *'compared to our potential rivals we have a*

⁵⁸ Author conducted interview with Adm. An, Byeong-tae.

⁵⁹ ROKN Latest Activities. (2007). *ROK CNO Inauguration Address*. Retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr/english/

⁶⁰ Author conducted interview with Adm. An Byeong-tae.

*latent inferiority in strength so in an emergency we need to be able to harm the enemy while ensuring our survival’.*⁶¹ What the ROKN views as a necessity is the ability to maintain their territorial integrity in the face of increasing challenges while not threatening their neighbours in a maritime environment where they are the potentially the weakest country.

THE ROK, JAPAN & CHINA: EEZ & SOVEREIGNTY

The maritime disagreements between the ROK and Japan centre on fishing rights in the East Sea and the resource exploitation issues in the East China Sea.⁶² While these issues are of a legal nature, they are marked by substantial historical legacy disputes which often determine and influence the argument particularly as politicians on both sides have used traditional enmity between the two countries to win short term domestic political victories. The fishing issue has been extant since the foundation of the ROK and was an issue of importance to the ROK government even during the Korean War. While efforts were made to reach mutually acceptable agreements on fishing rights, notably the 1965 fishery agreement which focused on agreeing boundary issues and marking exclusive and joint fishing zones, the fishing issue especially that of illegal fishing on both sides raised periodic tensions and was not wholly resolved.⁶³ The advent of EEZ in 1996 led to a push for a new fisheries agreement which was signed in 1998. This agreement declared 35 nm exclusive fishing zones and set up to joint fishery zones in the East Sea and East China Sea.⁶⁴ However, the crux of the issue is that of the status of Dokdo remained undetermined.

⁶¹ ROKN Headquarters (1999). 94

⁶² Kim, G-K (2009). *Island Disputes and Maritime Regime Building in East Asia: Between A Rock and a Hard Place*. New York: Springer. 177

⁶³ Ibid. 177-179

⁶⁴ Ibid.

Dokdo is at the heart of Japanese-ROK relations, occupied by the ROK and claimed by the Japanese, its status has been one of the determining factors in the ROK-Japan fishery agreements, which have been designed to resolve the issue to the extent that economic activity can be carried out while not conceding any claims to the island itself.⁶⁵ The issues as described by Van Dyke are twofold, the first is over ownership and the second over the status of Dokdo as an island and whether an EEZ can be generated from it.⁶⁶ While both issues are bound by international law and outside the scope of this paper, what is clear is the effect the island and the territorial issues have had on the ROK and its perception of maritime security.

For the ROK, what is at stake is more than maritime territorial rights; it is a conflict about the nature of the ROK as a state. The issue of Dokdo is underwritten by the historical narrative of the occupation of Korea by Japan and the pathological mistrust and suspicion that has arisen from it in the ROK body politic. Thus for the ROK public, Dokdo is as much a symbol of ROK independence as it is an issue of maritime importance. Examples of this can be found with the advent of Takeshima Day in Japan and the annual declarations of Japanese ownership in Japanese Defense White Papers which raise levels of tension in the ROK and are swiftly followed by diplomatic rebukes from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and often the President. The government's commitment to the cause of Dokdo can be seen in the presence of a link to a website dedicated to the cause on every ROK ministry homepage.⁶⁷ This is due to the fact that it would be extremely politically damaging to be seen to be giving ground to Japan

⁶⁵ Dokdo (독도) refers to the island of Dok, Do (도) being the Korean for Island. It is known as Takeshima in Japan and as the Liancourt Rocks. For the purposes of this thesis, Dokdo will be used.

⁶⁶ Van Dyke, J.M. (2007) Legal Issues Related to Sovereignty over Dokdo and its Maritime Boundary. *Ocean Development & International Law*, 38: (1). 157-224

⁶⁷ The website dedicated to the ownership of Dokdo is www.dokdo.mofat.go.kr

on such an important ideational let alone jurisdictional issue. Evidence of this ideational influence on ROK-Japanese affairs can be further seen in the naming of the East Sea/Sea of Japan which is a major policy initiative of the ROK government. It has in recent years made a significant effort for the sea to be internationally recognised as the East Sea. While having limited success on the issue, this serves to underline how important the ideational factor is in ROK-Japanese relations, specifically in the maritime sphere.⁶⁸ And while efforts are ongoing to agree on a permanent solution to EEZ delimitation, it seems unlikely that agreement will be reached over the status of Dokdo.

The securitisation of this issue is significant in that it is primarily driven by ideational issues. While both countries seem to deal with illegal fishing as a law enforcement issue, with the Korean Coast Guard taking the lead, the ROKN has had to maintain a presence around Dokdo, not matter how unlikely a Japanese attack will be. This is due to the need to maintain the public perception that the ROKN and the armed forces in general are protecting the ROK from outside threats. As is shown in chapter 6 the ROKN have used the issue to their advantage naming their largest ship after the island and photos of Dokdo feature prominently in defence publications in order to emphasise the presence of the military around the island.

The episodic increases in tension have on occasion exacerbated this issue with senior level defence meetings between the two countries being cancelled between 2005 and 2007 as

⁶⁸ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs also has a portion of its website dedicated to the naming of the East Sea. See: http://www.mofat.go.kr/ENG/policy/focus/eastsea/index.jsp?menu=m_20_10_20

tensions reached a peak in this period.⁶⁹ Indeed, it is clear that ROK-Japanese defence cooperation is linked to this issue with the ROKN acknowledging the difficulty of joint operations as long as the issue persists. This became even more apparent in 2012 when ROK-Japan relations hit a new low following a series of events which highlighted the precarious position of relations and importance of Dokdo. 2012 was meant to see the first formal military agreements being signed between the two countries. The first, the GSOMIA, was an intelligence sharing agreement on areas of mutual interest (the ROK had signed similar agreements with 26 other countries). The second, the ACSA was to assist logistical cooperation in overseas missions such as PKO and as such would have contributed towards easing the challenges of extended foreign deployments. Despite the limited nature of these agreements the realities of signing them with Japan made them extremely important not only in the context of mutual security but also in a symbolic demonstration of improving ROK-Japanese relations, however in an election year these agreements became untenable after the ROK administration tried to rush them through only to be foiled at the last minute by a combination of political and public opposition.

What followed was a significant disagreement over Dokdo, This dispute had been growing in potency over 2012 with a Korean Air over-flight of the island resulting in a 1 month Japanese government boycott of the airline, an attempt by Japanese law makers to visit the disputed region which was refused by the ROK government, and then the visit to the island by President Lee, Myung-bak on August 10th, which resulted in Japan recalling its Ambassador and the cancellation of a number bi-lateral meetings and seemingly the suspension of officer

⁶⁹ ROK MND (2007). *S. Korea's Defense Minister to Hold Separate Talks with U.S Japanese Counterparts Next Month*. Retrieved from www.mnd.go.kr

exchanges. Also there had been reports that a Japanese vessel did not stop or was prevented from stopping at the southern port of in Busan following a PSI exercise due to worries over public reaction in the ROK.⁷⁰ This suggests the problems caused by history are ever present and affect the strategic calculus in Seoul as to the extent and limits of direct bi-lateral ROK-Japanese cooperation. Importantly the 2012 ROK Defense White Paper significantly heightened the MND commitment to defending Dokdo stating,

'In particular, the ROK military is maintaining a strong readiness posture based on the unwavering resolve to safeguard Dokdo, which is undoubtedly the territory of the ROK in terms of geographical and historical facts and international law'.⁷¹

Again, the ability to counter the JMSDF in any scenario, however unlikely is an important driver in ROKN modernisation. Any force comparison between the JMSDF and the ROKN demonstrates comparative weakness for the latter and so in as much as the ability to counter any threat from Japan is important, so is the concept of the ROK having a force that is seen as a match for the JMSDF. As such the dispute between the two countries while in some ways militarised, is for the ROKN and ideational and perceptual one of national power and pride. The development of blue-water navy is an extension of this and meets both the ideational and military needs of the ROK in terms of Japanese maritime relations.

CONTESTED CLAIMS AND THE PRC

The PRC's relationship with the ROK is no less complicated than with that of Japan. In recent years, the PRC has replaced the US as the ROK's largest trading partner and fitting with the

⁷⁰ S.Korea refuses Japan port call in drill: Reports. (24/09/2012). AFP. Retrieved from http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5iZ9s4AM8-NRZlmtok-cySJ9uke_A?docId=CNG.3ea01502076bc5162e2446438d383b22.601

⁷¹ MND. (2012). 60

nature of East Asia has as a result a large if somewhat competitive commercial maritime relationship. While, the economies of the two countries are becoming more intertwined, the political relationship with the PRC is more complex. The PRC's support of the DPRK, along with its growing rivalry with the US has resulted in a mixed ROK approach to its larger neighbour. In becoming too close it risks the ire of the US and accusations of ignoring the US-Alliance, as happened during the Roh presidency, but neither can it ignore the PRC due to its political and economic power. Underlying these tensions is a less abrasive but still apparent historical perception of the PRC in the ROK. There is recognition of the large role the PRC has played in Korean affairs throughout history and contested territorial claims do still exist. An example of this is the Kokuryo affair, which is an argument over the identity of one of the three kingdoms during early Korean history (approximately 37 BC-690 AD). The Kokuryo kingdom controlled most of modern day North Korea and parts of Manchuria, and is central to Korean and ROK identity. In the 1980's the PRC began to claim this kingdom as part of Chinese rather than Korean heritage and tensions between the two countries occasionally flared over the issue, well in to 2006. While somewhat resolved (what is notable is a joint effort by both countries to downplay the issue, unlike the historical ROK-Japan contestations) it has provided the ROK public with greater suspicion about its overall territorial ambitions as it grows in strength.

The ROK and the PRC have no contested territorial claims in the maritime sphere; however they do have contested continental shelves and EEZ in the West Sea/Yellow Sea and the East China Sea where the coasts between the two countries are less than 400nm apart. As a result, there is occasional tension over fishery rights and illegal fishing. Despite signing a

fishery agreement in 2001, which delineates exclusive and joint fishing zones the ROK, illegal fishing remains a high profile issue of for the ROK, made worse by occasional acts of violence by Chinese fishermen against ROK officials.⁷² What is noticeable however, is the efforts of both countries to contain the situation (unlike PRC-Japanese coastguard clashes) and the joint proclamations that these are diplomatic and law enforcement rather than military matters.

A related issue which has gained more traction recently is that of leodo. This is a submerged reef approximately 150Km away from the ROK island of Marado off the Southwest of the country and not technically classified as a territory, yet being in the disputed EEZ and continental shelf it has since 2006 symbolised the conflicting claims between the PRC and the ROK.⁷³ While the PRC officials have made claims to this area, calling ROK operations around the reef provocative, both sides acknowledge the reality that it is not a true territorial issue and as Graham reasonably asserts, the occasional heightening of rhetoric surrounding leodo is linked to issues over fishing and DPRK relations. However, it too must be acknowledged that the area has the potential for energy exploitation and is viewed as strategically important for the ROK in terms of its economy and to protect access to its SLOC.⁷⁴ This is somewhat confirmed with the direct linkage of the construction of a naval base on Jeju-do and its proximity to leodo.⁷⁵ The reality of this justification is complex, undoubtedly the area around the leodo is important in terms of potential economic

⁷² Two ROK Coastguard officers have been murdered by Chinese fishermen; The first in 2008 and the second in 2011.

⁷³ Graham, E. (2012). South Korea's Maritime Challenges: Between a Rock and a Hard Base. RSIS Commentaries. No. 063/2012. 1-2

⁷⁴ Ibid.

⁷⁵ See Chapter 4

exploitation, however in constructing a controversial new naval base which was first considered in 1993 the excuse of leodo is quite convenient, Thus while the relationship between the PRC and the ROK is certainly complicated and the PRC naval development and outlined above poses a similar difficulty to the ROKN as the JMSDF, in that the ROKN requires an independent naval force that can match the PLAN but does not directly pose a challenge to it thus protecting the ROK's interests in its maritime territory.

It is extremely difficult to judge the extent to which ROKN views its largest neighbours as threats, what is certain is that the ROKN sees the need to match the power of these two countries and possess defensive capabilities should the need arise. Indeed in writing about its submarine program the ROKN states that is *'carrying out the principal of sea area defense and the protection of sea lanes by utilising submarines in spite of the intense military strength competition all over Northeast Asia'*.⁷⁶ This quote suggests that ROKN is well aware of its strategic environment and is developing with the ability to operate effectively in such a competitive theatre in mind. The protection of the ROK's EEZ and its territory is an extremely important element of the ROKN's mission however it is not reasonable to suggest that such development is taking away capabilities from deterrence, rather the ROKN is developing vessels which can perform both roles, a more capable ROKN has the ability to maintain DPRK operations while protecting its own territory from the influence of its neighbours,

4) SLOC PROTECTION AND ISLAND DISPUTES

Leading from the ROK's increasing dependence on the sea, especially as a medium for trade,

⁷⁶ ROKN Headquarters. *Republic of Korea Navy* <대한민국 해군> E-book retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr. 56.

the ROK's SLOC are a fundamental element in their commercial maritime activities and are a central part of the ROKN's future force development calculations and one of their major operational priorities. In particular maintaining open sea lanes is vital not just for economic and resource needs in peacetime, but with the threat of war with the DPRK an ever present in ROK defence policy considerations, SLOC have the added role of ensuring that supplies and US augmentation forces can reach the ROK in times of emergency. With the threat posed to these SLOC by the KPN, the ROKN has always been faced with having to protect its SLOC within the littoral as that is the operational extent of the KPN. But as the ROK has grown economically, developed as a maritime power and the maritime environment has grown more unstable there has been a clear drive to extend the ROKN's presence within the region ostensibly to ensure that it has the capability to protect its SLOC within the deep water areas of Asia and beyond. The issue arises in finding a balance between developing and committing resources to protect the SLOC on regional basis while maintaining the ability to defend them in the littoral during a time of war.

The ROKN has designated 4 major SLOC as being vital to the country's survival each of which are illustrated in Map 2; 1) The Korea-China SLOC, 2) The Korea-Japan SLOC, 3) The Southwest SLOC and 4) The Southeast SLOC.

1) The Korea-China SLOC

The Korea-China sea lane links the ROK with its largest trading partner both in imports and exports, any interference with this SLOC would have substantial effects on the ROK economy and food reserves. While no immediate threat presents itself, there is a possibility of interference due to disagreements between China and the ROK over fishing rights and the

sovereignty issues, especially regarding the issue of leodo and its surrounding areas. In a time of war with the DPRK this SLOC, as pointed out by Jung, Ho-sup will not need specific protection as it will be part of the specified combat zone.⁷⁷

2) The Korea-Japan SLOC

The Korea-Japan SLOC is of central significance due to the wartime operational plan. This is a primary passage for the augmentation of troops and from this respect is critical to the survival of the ROK in case of conflict with the DPRK.⁷⁸ As a result wartime protection would most likely be provided by the ROKN, USN and JMSDF, in peacetime, however unlikely, conflicts over Dokdo may disrupt this SLOC.

3) The Southwest SLOC

This is the most critical of SLOC in terms of its energy supply, at 6800 nm long it is a direct link to the Middle East but has also been identified as one of the ROK's most vulnerable. Its route passes past several areas of dispute including Taiwan and the Senkaku Islands in Northeast Asia and the Spratly and Parcel Islands in Southeast Asia. Additionally it passes through the Straits of Malacca and is exposed to the threat of piracy both in the Asian region and beyond. In wartime, US supplies will also pass along this SLOC. While its security is usually guaranteed through international cooperation the potential destabilising effects of conflict over any of the above disputes has meant that the ROKN has identified this as an SLOC which needs independent protection capability. This is the SLOC which has the most significance in changing the nature of the ROKN SLOC protection mission away from purely littoral defence towards a regional SLOC capability.

⁷⁷ Adm. Jung, H-S. (2007). ROK's Strategy on the Security of the SLOC <한국의 해로안보 전략> in KIMS (ed.) *The Security of the Sea Lines of Communication in East Asia* <동아시아 해로안보>. Seoul: KIMS 485-517. 493

⁷⁸ Ibid. 497

4) The South East SLOC

This route provides access to the US and Latin America, while important for trade purposes, it is also essential for wartime augmentation of forces and equipment. As with the ROK-Japan SLOC protection for this SLOC is provided by the USN and the JMSDF and as such naval cooperation and friendly relations are vital to its security during a wartime scenario.

Of the four SLOC mentioned above, the most important in terms of value to the ROK economy and symbolic in terms of expanded blue water operations is the Southwest SLOC. While in wartime this would undoubtedly be protected by the US, it is its peacetime protection that the ROKN sees as an absolute necessity. This point is illustrated in navy publications and specifically linked to the island disputes along the SLOC as is shown in Map 3 the significant disputes are over the Senkaku Islands, the Paracel Islands, the Spratley Islands and Taiwan, and while the ROK has no involvement in these disputes any outbreak of hostilities would potentially disrupt the flow of trade and oil to the ROK. The MND's view of the situation especially in SE Asia where the Senkaku and Paracel Islands are located is particularly illustrative:

'Considering the unique variety of the region, conditions of the maritime security environment and the region's historical ties with China, one cannot but anticipate security in the region with much optimism'⁷⁹.

This view of the region highlights the ROK's concern of instability and it is logical to extend this to concern over the vulnerability of its SLOC. Leading from this, the concept of the Mobile Flotilla which is the cornerstone of the ROKN's blue water ambitions is one of an

⁷⁹ MND (1999). 1998 Defense White Paper. Seoul: MND. 25

independent force capable of protecting the ROK's commercial shipping. This need for an independent defence capability is motivated by the ROK's unique position between the PRC; its major trading partner, Japan; a historic rival but significant ally to the US and the US itself. Any conflict between these and other powers in Southeast Asia would require the ROK to make hard strategic choices and the presence of an independent naval capability aimed at allowing ROK shipping to get through the conflict area without the involvement of the warring parties both provides a greater political and strategic flexibility to protect the ROK's interests and fits with concept of the ROK developing a force capable of regional operations.

SENKAKU

Located in the East China Sea, the Senkaku Islands are an uninhabited collection of 5 islands and three rocks, sovereignty of which is currently held by Japan but contested by both the PRC and Taiwan. While the dispute can be considered to be local, the location of the Islands along a significant SLOC, could lead it to have significant impact on nearby countries especially the ROK and Russia.

The legality of the dispute is beyond the scope of this thesis, but the issue of contestation can be broken down to the retention of Japanese control of the Islands after the end of WWII despite PRC and Taiwanese claims that these Islands should have been handed back under the provisions of the 1943 Cairo Declaration, the 1945 Potsdam Proclamation and Article 2 of the San Francisco Peace Treaty.⁸⁰ The significance of the dispute is described by

⁸⁰ Koo, M G. (2009). *Island Disputes and Maritime Regime Building in East Asia Between a Rock and a Hard Place*. New York: Springer. 104-105

Koo as both tangible and intangible.⁸¹ The former is not related to the inhabitation of the Islands but of the control sovereignty would provide over the extensive potential energy deposits located around them. Evidence of this can be seen in the fact that the PRC only began to object to Japanese control in 1968 once the discovery of oil and gas deposits could be confirmed. On this level the dispute could thus be ascribed to resource competition between the two major regional powers, an issue that is exacerbated by the introduction and interpretation of the UNLCOS regulations which has been outlined above. A result of UNCLOS is that using the Islands as a baseline, the state with sovereignty could claim an EEZ with an area of approximately 11,700 square nautical miles around the Islands.⁸² On an intangible level, the issue of control of these Islands rests on the historical relationship between Japan and China and the current issue of power competition between the rising power of the PRC and its former colonial master.⁸³ Indeed as will be shown the actions of nationalist groups on all sides of the dispute has exacerbated tensions and are symbolic of the underlying nationalistic trait of the dispute while at the same time being useful to the governments involved in emphasising their claims.

The dispute over the Islands has seen a number of significant escalations over the past 40 years. The first being between 1968 and 1971, then 1978, 1990-'91, 1996-'97, 2004-'05 and 2008 to the time of writing. These escalations have been driven to a degree by geo-strategic issues such as 1968-'71 which was ostensibly about oil exploration rights in the region and in the 1996-'97 which was related to the Japanese declaration of EEZ around the Islands leading to disputes over fishing rights and accusation by Japan of illegal fishing by Taiwanese

⁸¹ Ibid. 105

⁸² Valencia, M. J. (2000). Domestic Politics Fuels Northeast Asia Maritime Disputes. *Asia Pacific Issues No.43*. 2

⁸³ Koo (2009). 105

vessels. The 2004 dispute involved tit for tat oil exploration and exploitation activities within the disputed area, however what is important to note is that all of these disputes were sparked or were exacerbated by the actions of nationalist groups. On various occasions activists from the PRC, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Japan have landed on the disputed islands to symbolise sovereignty, the reactions to these landings often result in protests which have brought the issues named above to a head. However an important point to note is that the both the PRC and Japan have managed to both contain the nationalist fervour of their populations and draw back from potential conflict over the Islands through agreeing to disagree over sovereignty while negotiating issues of more immediate importance. More recently events have once again shown some signs of escalation with an emphasis on all sides regarding fishing activities, two significant collision events have occurred in 2008 and 2010, the former between a Taiwanese fishing vessel and the Japanese Coast Guard and the latter between a PRC fishing vessels and the Japanese Coast Guard.

Events of 2012 furthered heightened tensions as PRC and Taiwanese vessels frequently entered the area around the islands and the conflict became increasingly militarised forcing the Japanese Defence Forces to respond with aircraft. Indeed it is reported that between March and November 2012 PRC ships entered the contested area 47 times and in the same period the Japanese Air Force scrambled 160 times to respond to potential threats. These actions have coincided with infrequent outbursts of nationalism on all sides, however while the situation periodically escalates, as Fravel argues there is a more persistent albeit fragile stability one which is likely to remain given the high cost of significant escalation into open

conflict.⁸⁴ The implications of this dispute as spelt out above are quite significant and while there is a fragile tension the issue itself has led to a heightened regional sense of instability in terms of potential conflict between the two largest indigenous powers in the region.

THE SOUTH CHINA SEAS: SPRATLY & PARACEL ISLANDS

The South China Seas are some of the most contested waters in the world with overlapping EEZ and two high level territorial disputes which have led to open combat in the past. The first Islands of contention are the Paracel Islands, located south of Hainan at about 200 miles of the Vietnamese coast they were occupied by Vietnam until their annexation by the PRC following a naval clash in 1974. The second group of islands, the Spratly Islands are spread over a much larger area and consist of over 190 islets, reefs and shoals.⁸⁵ While the area of the Islands (over 250,000 square km) adds resonance to the disputes so does the number of claimants, including the PRC, Vietnam (both of whom claim the entire area but occupy sections of it), Malaysia, the Philippines and Brunei (all of whom occupy parts of the Islands but claim limited areas). While the legitimacy of the claims are too various for this thesis, a significant factor behind the contestation is the large oil and gas deposits believed to be (but not yet found) in the area.

The danger in this highly militarised region (most of the countries involved maintain a significant naval forces in the region) is the likelihood of conflict breaking out, something

⁸⁴ Fravel, M. T. (2010). Explaining Stability in the Senkaku (Diaoyu) Islands Dispute. In Gerald Curtis, Ryosei Kokubun and Wang Jisi, (eds), *Getting the Triangle Straight: Managing China–Japan–US Relations*. Washington, DC: The Brookings Institution. 160

⁸⁵ Kim (2000). 66

that has happened in the past.⁸⁶ This danger has been heightened by the increase in naval procurement throughout the region as outlined below with the added intensity of a more aggressive PRC stance on the islands coupled with a growing US presence following its Asian pivot and through developing maritime alliances with Vietnam and the Philippines. Any open conflict would likely have a significant impact on navigation in one of the most transited regions on the planet and as such the risk of third parties being drawn in or affected by such a dispute is quite high. It is for this type of potential conflict that the ROKN is preparing for, unwilling to anger the PRC and needing to ensure a secure supply of energy and goods to and from the Middle East an independent naval force capable of responding to emergencies within the region is what the ROK as middle power requires.

TAIWAN

This form of independence is highlighted in the dispute between Taiwan and the PRC, which is also significant as an external driver of ROKN regional reform. The issue surrounds both the geographic location of the island, over which any conflict would affect ROK's SLOC toward the Middle East and the reality of being split between the US Alliance and the PRC. The ROK's main goal when it comes to the PRC-Taiwan conflict is to avoid being forced to engage on either side if conflict does occur, concurrently it maintains a hedging strategy, attempting to mollify both sides. This attitude of trying to maintain a regional balance was evident in President Roh's 2005 statement at the Korean Air Force Academy, where he referred to the ROK's unwillingness to become involved in any confrontation between the

⁸⁶ Between 1974 and 2002 there have been 17 armed clashes in the South China Seas due to conflicts over territorial claims.

PRC and the US:⁸⁷

"It should be clarified that we will not be embroiled in any conflict in Northeast Asia against our will".⁸⁸

As can be seen the ROK's desire to retain a degree of independence from any US/Japanese conflict with the PRC, provides a significant rationale for increasing naval forces, this becomes especially true when taking in to account the perception that the US may not be able to guarantee the safety of ROK shipping.

The Taiwan issue sums up the reality of the ROK's regional threat perception. It is a potential isolation and the need to protect its own interests which have driven the ROKN toward regional capability despite the need to protect the littoral from traditional and non-traditional threats. The protection of their SLOC is a significant element in their reasoning behind force modernisation and in the setting of platform capabilities. How they view the threats to their SLOC indicates a fear of being effected by a conflict not of their own making. It is evident that the ROK would struggle to align itself with anyone against the PRC given its close economic ties while the relationship with the US in terms of peninsular security and military cooperation is vital and not worth jeopardising. There is a strategic and political calculus in having a force capable of independent operations and keeping the ROK's sea routes open while at the same time keeping out of regional disputes which have in the past resulted in the damaging of ROK interests.

⁸⁷ Kan, S. A., & Niksch, L. A. (2007). *Guam: US Defense Deployments*. Washington DC: Congressional Research Service. 5

⁸⁸ Roh, Moo-hyun, "Address at the 53rd Commencement and Commissioning Ceremony of the Korea Air Force Academy", (2005) retrieved from www.16cwnd.pa.go.ky.

III.V CONCLUSION: THE CHEONAN AND CHANGING PERCEPTIONS

The sea is the commercial conduit through which the economies of the East Asia flow. The last twenty years have seen a significant increase in the importance of the sea in Asia as regional economies developed and factors of tension such as territorial disputes and resource exploitation issues became more vital. Compounded by historical tensions and military build-ups in the region are dynamic, essential and yet unstable. The ROK has not been excluded from this phenomenon; its remarkable economic expansion following the end of the Korean War has left the ROK dependent on the sea as a medium of trade and a lifeline for energy and raw material to feed its economy.

However despite this reliance the ROK, a geo-strategic island, has traditionally held a very narrow view of its maritime security. The land threat from the DPRK overrode any appreciation of wider defence needs and as a result the ROKN was limited to the littoral, charged with countering any aggressive acts made by the KPN. This situation remains to this day and the ROKN's has retained its primary focus on deterrence. Within the context of modernisation the threat of the KPN was always taken into account and the ROK has reacted quickly when needed to counter altered or advanced threats from the KPN. However beginning in the 1990s following the end of the Cold War a wider appreciation of ROK security began to take hold in Seoul. As a result the ROKN began to look at regional issues as factors of importance, the need to protect its fishing and economic exploitation rights have gained greater traction within the ROKN and with the developing power of the PRC and consistent strength of the JMSDF the ROKN is attempting to produce forces that will deter

any potential threats to the ROK's jurisdiction. The regional threat assessment is more complex, based around the need to defend the country's SLOC, the ROKN views the inherent instability in the region as significant in that despite being a third party, island or resource disputes between a host of states in the region would disrupt the vital sea links to the Middle East. As a result the ROKN needs a force capable of escorting vital cargo through conflict areas without the need for outside assistance.

Each of these missions pulls the ROKN in a different direction and it is this challenge of maintaining operations in the littoral and ensuring that deterrence continues to be effective while at the same time procuring platforms and developing an organisational structure that can respond to regional threats and protect the ROK's economic interests that has proven to be extremely difficult. At no time has the ROKN demonstrated a wilful neglect of the littoral in favour of the regional and what it requires is a force that is capable of maintaining consistent operations against the DPRK something that has been and remains the key operational priority while at the same time is able to meet the other roles assigned to it in seas surrounding the peninsula and in the wider regional maritime area.

The sinking of the *Cheonan* and the shelling of Yeonpyeong-do has brought the operational priorities of the ROKN in to greater public and political focus and has raised questions as to the nature of ROKN modernisation within the context of the DPRK versus future threats. Following the sinking the ROKN came in for substantial and sustained criticism for neglecting the NLL and the threat posed by the KPN in favour of regional development. While the development of platforms and weapons systems will be addressed in Chapter Four, the

criticisms the ROKN and the impact of the events of 2010 have had on the ROKN provide some insight into mission priorities and a slightly heightened threat perception. Following the sinking the status of the NLL and its security became a more emotive issue and the stance of the ROK and the MND has hardened. This is demonstrated in the 2012 Defense White Paper which declared *'since its establishment on 30 August 1953, the NLL has been observed as the de facto maritime boundary between South Korea and North Korea. The waters south of the NLL are under ROK jurisdiction'*.⁸⁹ While not ground-breaking in its meaning the symbolism in this statement is important as it is the first Defense White Paper to describe ROK view on the NLL and demonstrates a hardening of commitment in Seoul toward DPRK defence.

Further to this the ROK defense posture has altered with a revised defense plan named Defense Reform 11-30 aimed at developing ROK forces towards combating the strengths of and countering its provocations.⁹⁰ For the ROKN they had to react to the increased focus on the NLL and the need to counter the KPN's submarine threat. A telling fact to emerge from this incident was the ROKN, withstanding the inherent difficulties of detecting submarines in a littoral environment, was not prepared for an A-symmetric submarine attack and had focused on surface warfare around the NLL. This was a key finding of the White Paper on the lessons to be learned from the sinking which stated *'the ROKN focused on the a North Korean provocation using their shore artillery, long range artillery and surface to surface missiles...this resulted in the reduction of the readiness posture regarding North Korea's*

⁸⁹ MND. (2012). 59

⁹⁰ This plan was originally known as Defence Reform 307. This plan will be described in more detail in Chapter Seven.

submarines'.⁹¹ This does not suggest that the ROKN ignored the threat from the DPRK but rather under-estimated it. As a result of these issues and the political fallout the ROKN began to move away from demonstrating its blue water initiative and instead focused on showing a renewed commitment to NLL operations. In part this was done through the ramping up of ASW capabilities and the procurement of new patrol boats and the speedier introduction of the *Inchon* class frigate. Additionally the MND created a ROKMC led command called the Northwest Island Defense Command which is designed to counter threats to the five islands near the NLL and improve their response capabilities.

The renewed focus on the DPRK is emphasized in the 2010 and 2012 Defense White Papers both of which state that the navy is *'focused on reinforcing its capabilities based on the lessons learned from the attack on the ROK Ship Cheonan'*⁹². However there is little mention of what new capabilities will be added beyond those that were already in planning or initial stages before the sinking. Interestingly in 2013 the ROKN CNO Adm. Choi Yoon-hee seems to reinvigorate the blue-water debate stating the

'The navy will go beyond the current maritime operations concept under which it relied on the U.S. Navy...it is illogical to passively operate the current Korea-U.S. operational capabilities. (We) will seek to change the current paradigm by swiftly securing maritime superiority and projecting naval power'.⁹³

What this suggests is that the public move away from blue water was potentially a short

⁹¹ Republic of Korea Government (2011). *Cheonan Warship shooting Incident White Paper* <천안함 피격사건 백서>. Seoul: Republic of Korea Government. 34

⁹² MND.(2012). 55.

⁹³ The Korea Herald (2013). *Navy pushes blue-water operations*. Retrieved from <http://m.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20130207000954&ntn=0>

term somewhat politically motivated manoeuvre. The ROKN is trying to get the procurement greater operational capabilities back on track despite what is a stricter view of operational priorities in Seoul.

The threats the ROKN faces are multiple in number but the reality of their operations is that despite a growing ROK interaction and reliance on the sea the actions of the DPRK will always impact on future force planning and operations. The ROKN needs to be able to respond to a multitude of threats and undertake numerous missions that meet both their immediate security needs and those of responsible global stakeholder. The Northeast maritime environment is particularly competitive, especially for the ROK with the threat from the DPRK ever present. The ROKN needs to be a force than can respond to both the threats in the littoral and the regional while not ignoring either.

CHAPTER 4

THE ROKN: FORCE MODERNISATION AND STRUCTURE

IV.I INTRODUCTION

The political approval for a blue water navy was the fruition of considerable effort by the ROKN to persuade the government and the defence establishment of the need for a regional force. The original plan presented by Admiral An, Byeong-tae was for a modern naval force capable of operating a mobile flotilla out to the Malacca Straits which ‘*could spend at least one month at sea without any support*’ and would consist of a ‘*small aircraft carrier and other screening ships and also at sea support ships and submarines*’.¹ This was a major departure from the then ROKN’s capabilities and mission set and led some to believe that the ROKN was attempting to forgo its focus on the DPRK and look towards the larger maritime arena.² What this chapter will demonstrate is that while a regional operational capability is one of the goals that the ROKN is pursuing, the creation of a modern ROKN is a much wider force development effort aimed at modernizing the entire fleet to not only advance into deep water operations but to provide an independent naval capability focused on territorial defence from both the North and the region surrounding the peninsula. As

¹ Author conducted interview with Admiral An (April 2011).

² This was a common belief amongst the media in the ROK, something that was not helped by the ROKN’s adoption of a slogan designed to promote blue-water development.

such the underlying tension between regional operations and homeland defence has placed strain on focused doctrinal and force development and has had a significant impact on the procurement and utilization of larger force assets. This has left the ROKN with the basis of a blue water navy and with the appearance of the creation of an outward capable force but with reality of having to maintain- through the deployment of the majority of its forces around the peninsula- its focus inwards.

The difficulty in assessing how the ROKN's platforms match their operational priorities outlined in the previous chapter is found in the fact that the majority of the platforms purchased are large modern vessels and therefore multi-functional, which as Till asserts *'allow the commander greater flexibility across the whole range of operational activity involved in high-or low- intensity conflict and also increases the range of facilities that can be offered in peace support and humanitarian missions'*.³ Thus a ship such as the KDX-III or even the *Dokdo* LPH can be deployed for a variety of missions and are not dedicated to performing one operation. A further problem which arises is assessing useful operational range, even the new *Incheon* class frigates, which have been ostensibly deployed to upgrade the ROKN's deterrence capabilities have a deployable range of approximately 8000km and thus capable of deploying great distances from the peninsula. Therefore in reality the modern vessels the ROKN has purchased can, with the exception of the submarines and the patrol craft, deploy for extended durations indeed the case of the PKX class of patrol craft is probably the easiest of the modern platforms to assess given their construction history and load out clearly being aimed at the DPRK and the littoral waters around the peninsula. Thus

³ Till, G. (2009). *Seapower A Guide for the Twenty-First Century* 2nd ed. Routledge: Oxon. 122

for the author the only method to match platforms, operations and structure with mission priorities is to take a holistic approach where the type of vessel and its load out, the number in the class, the deployment within a force structure and the operations and training are combined to create a picture of operational priorities which can be matched to assess the effectiveness of the procurement program and the ability of the ROKN to meet their threat perceptions and missions.

With this approach in mind the chapter will be divided into 4 parts, the first examines the ROKN's actual force modernisation program and its focus on qualitative rather quantitative development. The nature of the procurement provides an insight into the direction the ROKN is heading and the realities of its capabilities versus its goals. The second section looks at the ROKN's force structure and organisation and argues that despite undergoing alteration retains the basis for deterrent operations with the ROKN's regional component being adjunct to the major fleet commands. In this context the third part analyses the ROKN's missions and current deployments and provides an insight into the potential difficulties for ROKN modernisation in terms of platform numbers and the division between littoral and regional commitments. The conclusion looks to future plans and how recent events such as the sinking of the Cheonan has further exposed the difficulties of moving towards a regional presence while maintaining forces in the littoral. It concludes that the ROKN has never ignored its deterrent mission but has viewed force modernisation in terms of the duality of the littoral and the regional. However, the difficulties of doing so are manifest and the threat from the DPRK will continue to influence the ROKN's perception of sea power and its own force modernisation program.

IV.II FORCE IMPROVEMENT

The drive for an advanced naval capability has been underpinned by a multi-faceted force improvement effort which has looked to add new capabilities and re-enforce existing ones through domestic platform development, the addition of both indigenously designed and imported weapons system, the introduction of C4I capabilities and the ability to operate on the surface, under the water and in the air. In doing so the ROKN has met many of the goals it set out in its future force documents with Navy Vision 2020 stating that future naval platforms should *'perform multi-dimensional operations...and be able to strike targets deep inland'* a concept that was emphasised in Navy Vision 2030 which looked for a force capable of *'Omni-directional deterrence against threats and emergencies'*.^{4 5} It is in examining this approach that the picture of what the ROKN is attempting becomes clearer and while the move toward blue water regional operations is an integral element of this development, it is part of wider plan for a qualitatively superior (or equal) if numerically inferior force when compared with the current threat posed by the DPRK or the potential competitors in the Asian maritime environment. As such it is imperative that the entire force improvement project is examined in order to determine the direction of future ROKN operations and the balance that is being struck between littoral and regional roles.

THE KDX PROGRAM

A significant portion of the ROKN's surface fleet modernization has been based around the KDX program. This is the code name for the design and construction of three classes of

⁴ ROKN Headquarters (1999). *Navy Vision 2020 <해군비전 2020>*. Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 87

⁵ ROKN Headquarters (2008). *Navy Vision 2020 <해군비전 2030>*. Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 33

indigenous surface vessels, the KDX-I, KDX-II and KDX-III.⁶ These ships were in part constructed to replace the ROKN's World War Two era destroyers which had previously filled the role of a heavy surface component and were the principle ASW platforms. However the multi-functionality of these vessels in combination with their relatively advanced sensors and weapon weapons systems and in the case of the KDX-III strike capability demonstrates a significant improvement in capabilities and command and control. An important point to note is that these ships were conceived in the early the 1980s when the concept of operations outside of deterrence had not yet been articulated within government circles or publically. The blue water ambition did not lead the design of these ships but came after their conception, proving that a greater capability within the context of peninsular security was the initial goal. The multi-functionality of the platforms in combination with their improved range provided the navy with ability to pursue regional operations once the other factors were in place and the threat perception and needs of the ROK demanded it.

The first of these ship classes, the KDX-I (*Kwangaetto Daewang* class) was originally conceived of in 1981 and had a proposed construction date of 1990. These vessels were planned to replace existing platforms but their greater operational range and load presented a significant improvement in ROKN surface warfare. Due to design delays caused by the addition of further operational requirements the steel for the initial platform was cut in 1994 and the keel of the first ship was laid down in 1995.⁷ Two more ships were added to this class but the delays in its construction meant that resource priority shifted towards the

⁶ From this point the author will refer to all KDX class ships using this code name

⁷ Saunders, Stephan, (2010) '*Jane's Fighting Ships*', Surrey: IHS Janes. 465

KDX-II and III and as such only three vessels form this class.⁸

The delay in the design phase of the ship was caused by the addition of an improved air defence and combat control requirement and as such these ships were the first steps for a qualitative rather than a quantitatively superior force.⁹ Thus, the weapons load out demonstrates that these ships were to perform a multi-functional role, with an emphasis on ASW, better sea-keeping capabilities and enhanced combat power. The major departure for this ship over all others in the ROKN fleet up to this point was the installation of the SSCS Mk 7 combat data system which was initially designed and installed for the Royal Navy's Type 23 destroyers.¹⁰ This was a major advance in capability for the ROKN and signalled their recognition of the need for advanced ships to operate in what was termed the 3 dimensional combat environments (surface, air, subsurface). As such the KDX-I possesses much greater air defence and surveillance capability with the use of the SPS 49V5 air search radar and the Sea Sparrow missile system.¹¹ Additionally, the KDX-I carries 2 quad launchers for the Harpoon SSM and 6 324 mm torpedo tubes armed with the Mk 46 anti-submarine torpedo. Its ASW capability is enhanced with the installation of a hull mounted active sonar, a passive towed array and 1 Westland *Superlynx* helicopter which in the ASW configuration carries a dipping sonar and Mk 46 torpedoes.¹²

⁸ 17-20 platforms of this class were planned but cancelled in favour of the KDX-II/III and FFX projects. See: Wertheim, Eric (2007) 'Naval Institute Guide to Combat Fleets of the World 15th ed.' Annapolis, Naval Institute Press. 429

⁹ Republic of Korea Naval Headquarters, *Republic of Korea Navy* <대한민국 해군>. E-book retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr . 173

¹⁰ Friedman, Norman (1997) 'The Naval Institute Guide to World Naval Weapons Systems 1997-1998' Annapolis: Naval Institute Press. 114

¹¹ Wertheim, E. (2007).429

¹² *Ibid*

The use of an advanced combat control system allows the class to operate in a multi-threat environment and to act as an individual combat unit or as part of an integrated fleet. It also appears that the ROKN intends these vessels to be the initial command and control platform for littoral operations before a dedicated C4I capable ship arrives. Their basing as the flag ship of each of the three fleet commands confirms this assessment of their capability. Their primary mission is to be the heavy force presence until more capable reinforcements arrive and as such they are tasked with traditional DPRK oriented and territorial defence missions and in this role are a large step forward in relation to what the ROKN had previously. Of particular interest are the ASW capabilities which far outclassed previous vessels and provided the ROKN with ability to meet a perceived need in terms of the KPN's capabilities.

- Command & Control of Initial Operations
- Pre-emptive Strike Against Enemy Combatants to Deter War
- Air Defence
- Extend ASW Through Helicopter Deployment
- Participate in Joint Exercises & Military Diplomacy

TABLE 4.1: Defined Missions of KDX-I Information from www.navy.mil.kr (retrieved 20/02/2012) in Korean

The KDX-II (*Chungmungong Yi, Sunshin*) class destroyer similarly to the KDX-I was indigenously designed and equipped with both Korean and foreign weapons systems, these ships were the first ROKN ships to possess area/zone air defence capability. Larger than the KDX-I class (5,500 tons compared with 3,855 fully loaded); they should not be seen as a direct replacement for any previous platform operated by the ROKN and represent a large increase in firepower and operational flexibility.

The design phase for this class began in the late 1980's with initial approval for construction granted in 1996, the first of the initial batch of three was laid down in 2001 with 5 more

being laid down in successive years.¹³ The combat improvement this class brings centres around the SM2 (Block IIIA) surface to air missile, with an effective range of around 90 nm, it enables the KDX-II to provide wide area air defence and thus act effectively as either part of a manoeuvre force or as flag ship to one of the three ROKN permanent fleets.¹⁴ It also possesses strong point air defence systems with 1 RAM M 49 launcher for RIM-116 missiles and 1 Goalkeeper CIWS.¹⁵ Additional weapons systems include Harpoon, ASROC VLS and a 5" gun, which in combination with an updated sensor and command and control suite similar to that of the KDX-I allow the ship to perform multi-purpose operations.¹⁶

- Combat Ship of the Manoeuvre Force
- Long Range Area Air Defence
- Omni-directional Warfare (ASW/Amphibious Support/Power Projection)

TABLE 4.2: Defined Missions of KDX-II Information from www.navy.mil.kr (retrieved 20/02/2012) in Korean

The KDX-III (*Sejong Daewang*) AEGIS destroyer can be seen as the culmination of the KDX program. The first of a batch of three was commissioned in 2008 after a 13 year design and construction cycle and the last was commissioned in August 2012. These three ships, which are close in design to the *Arleigh Burke* class of the USN are based around the AEGIS combat system and their greater size (10,290 tons fully loaded) allow them to carry an armament unmatched by any other ROKN vessel.¹⁷

Armed with SM2-MR (Block IIIB) surface to air missiles in a VLS launch system combined with harpoon, Korean built land attack cruise missiles, ASROC (*Red Shark*) and K745 (*Blue Shark*) torpedoes, these ships are truly multi-purpose vessels capable of operating in a high

¹³ Saunders, S. (2010).463

¹⁴ Friedman, N. (1997). 416-417

¹⁵ Saunders, S. (2010).463

¹⁶ *Ibid*

¹⁷ *Ibid*. 464

threat environment. The *Aegis* system which tracks multiple targets allows for a high C4I capability and thus the KDX-III are built to be the flag ships of the manoeuvre flotilla.

- Execute 3 Dimensional Combat utilising the Aegis system
- Strategic and tactical strike on enemy targets
- Provide area air defence for both mobile fleets and convoys against enemy aircraft and missiles
- Conduct MASOC (Maritime Air Support Operations Centre) operations for all aircraft in the maritime theatre

Table 4.3: Defined Missions of the KDX-III Information from www.navy.mil.kr (retrieved 20/02/2012) in Korean

As can be seen in Table 4.3 the ROKN has clearly defined the roles the AEGIS will perform and what is of note is the dual role that these entail. Both blue water operations and territorial protection are included and there is no doubt that while they are classified by the ROKN as ocean going ships, that they have a defined role in protecting the ROK's EEZ and undertaking both defensive and offensive actions against the DPRK. The MASOC role for example is regarded by the ROKN as extremely important; acknowledging the capability of the KPN to undertake swarm high speed amphibious attack operations, it is believed that the best way to defend against these will be by air through naval helicopters and other air assets, thus the ability to coordinate such large air operations is considered extremely important and the AEGIS system central to their success.¹⁸ Another vital development for the ROKN is the deployment of indigenously designed cruise missiles named '*Haeseong-2*' they have an effective range of 500km and represent for the first time an ROKN ability to effectively engage in strategic strike missions. While these missiles could be deployed anywhere it is logical to assume that they are aimed at a scenario involving the DPRK, thus one of the most symbolic ships of the blue water navy has an effective and for the ROKN important role in

¹⁸ Author Conducted Interview with Admiral Song (ret.) Chairman of the Korean Institute for Maritime Studies (April 2011)

any peninsula security scenario. This role in peninsular security has been widened with the use of the *Aegis* system to track DPRK missile launches and while the deployment of the SM-3 missile which would be needed to perform effective ballistic missile defence is still uncertain due to the high cost, the value of having an at sea tracking capability is high in terms of the ROK's independent defence capability.

The KDX program has formed the bedrock of the drive to improve the ROKN's capabilities. They are inherently multi-functional vessels with significant abilities in ASW, AAW and ASUW and such have added greatly to the ROKN's arsenal. What is important to note is that these platforms were designed to be used both within the context of the regional and the peninsula and were never intended to be or have been limited to one or the other mission set. As will be demonstrated their deployments and especially operational and training history confirm this point.

THE FFX PROGRAM

The FFX (*Incheon* class) is the next generation frigate programme of the ROKN. These ships are designed to replace the ageing *Ulsan* frigates and *Pohang/Donghae* corvettes. The first of the class was launched in 2011 and a further 18-20 are planned in three batches, which will seemingly allow for future design alterations.¹⁹ While in total there will be fewer platforms after the older ships are decommissioned, it is expected that the addition of more capable AAW systems, combined with helicopter capability and advanced ASW/ASUW weapons will ensure that force superiority is maintained.²⁰ The mission set for these ships seems to be a direct replacement for the existing platforms; therefore they will be central to

¹⁹ Keymer, Eleanor (2010) '*Jane's World Navies Issue Five May 2010*' Surrey: IHS Jane's P. 277

²⁰ 37 vessels down to approximately 24

EEZ and inshore SLOC protection. However some design weaknesses are apparent, the lack of a VLS system reduces their weapons load out, and means that they will be unable to deploy the Red Shark ASROC missile, additionally while said to be designed to perform anti-aircraft operations, the use of the RAM Mk 31 missile system suggests that their anti-aircraft capability is purely for self-defence and it has no wider air-defence role.²¹ What can be said however is that these ships with their helicopter capacity and advanced sonar suite will provide much improved ASW performance. Additionally, the installation of indigenous anti-ship and cruise missiles should provide adequate mission flexibility. While these ships are only becoming operational in the era post-*Cheonan*, it should not be assumed that their development was a response to the sinking. In reality, the design and contractual phases of these ships occurred much earlier with the initial construction contractors chosen in 2006. This provides important evidence that the ROKN was not solely following a regional development path but was also intent on improving its existing capabilities. This issue surrounding the construction of these vessels is the ability of the ROKN to find funding to construct this class of ship while at the same time developing its other platforms. The sinking of the *Cheonan* provided political initiative to increase the production of this class of vessel through the provision of greater funds and so there was a commensurate reduction in the budget for other projects.

- Maximise ASW capability
- Mission Flexibility

TABLE 4.4: Defined Missions of FFX Information from www.navy.mil.kr (retrieved 20/02/2012) in Korean

²¹ The Red Shark ASROC missile is an indigenously designed anti-submarine weapon intended for deployment on ships carrying the KVLS missile launch system. See 'South Korea Starts Red Shark Torpedo Production' (25/08/2009) at www.naval-technology.com

THE PKX PROGRAM

The PKX (*Gumdoksuri* class) programme began development in 2003 following the detection of defects in existing *Chamsuri* CLASS patrol boats following the sinking of one during the 2nd battle of Yeonpyeong.²² This programme involves two different classes, the PKG-A (*Yun Youngha* Class) and the PKG-B (unknown name). The PKG-A of which 8 had been commissioned by the end of 2011 are a 570 ton patrol vessel armed with one 76 mm cannon, one 40 mm cannon and 4 *Haesung* SSM.²³ The PKG-B will be significantly smaller, reportedly around 250 tons with no armament currently specified. In total there is planned to be about forty units of approximately 20 each and will gradually replace the existing fleet of the *Chamsuri* class. These ships are the only class of vessel constructed that are dedicated to and designed for deterrent operations.

- Patrol Operations
- Support ASUW/AAW/ECW

TABLE 4.5: Defined Missions of PKX Information from www.navy.mil.kr (retrieved 20/02/2012) in Korean

THE LPX PROGRAM

Commissioned in 2007 the *Dokdo* class LPD is a significant leap forward for the ROKN. Classified with some pride as the largest vessel of its type in Asia, it has a 19,000 ton full load displacement and is capable of carrying up to 700 troops with 10 tanks, two air cushioned landing vehicles (LCAC) and 10 helicopters (planned).²⁴ Additionally it has a modern sensor suite manufactured by Samsung Thales based on the TACTICOS system which allows for integrated operations, combined with a 3D surface search radar and a long range air search radar. This provides the *Dokdo* with C4I capabilities allowing it to act as the flag/command ship of any ROKN integrated fleet. The self defence weapons systems include 2 *Goalkeeper*

²² For lessons learned see: MND (2010) Defense White Paper. MND: Seoul. 320

²³ Keymer, E. (2010). 277

²⁴ Saunders, S. (2010). 471

CIWS and the RAM 116 missile system.²⁵ While these are adequate for limited air defence, it seems that for mission security tandem operations with the KDX-III or II would be required. This platform represented a major step forward in ROKN amphibious and air operations capability and its proposed mission set reflect this. Its versatility means that the ROKN view it as a platform capable of performing wartime amphibious operations, fleet control and ASW operations and in peacetime, it is tasked with PKO and PKF support, humanitarian operations and national prestige enhancement.²⁶

The latter task is notable as during discussions relating to procuring such a platform the ROKN argued strongly that possession of an LPD/light aircraft carrier was an important symbolic factor in demonstrating the ROK's growth.²⁷ However, initially planned as a three ship project currently only the *Dokdo* is in service and there is a degree of uncertainty regarding when the next ship will be built, current estimates indicate that the next in class will be commissioned in 2018-2019 although no orders have been placed yet.²⁸ It is debatable that despite already been named that other ships in this will ever been built, the current vessel despite being in service since 2007 has not had any helicopters permanently assigned to it and funding for a new helicopter compliment has been repeatedly cut suggesting that this vessels and its roles are low down on this list of government priorities. The *Dokdo* along with the KDX-III is in many ways symbolic of the blue water project

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ The anti-submarine role of the DOKDO LPD has not been publically confirmed possibly due to the current lack of deployable helicopter capability, however post-Cheonan exercises with the USN suggest that the vessels can used as a launch platform for ASW helicopters. (The *Dokdo* lacks ASW capability in her own right).

²⁷ This argument seemed to centre on Thailand and its carrier capability, the admiral involved in the discussions argued that if Thailand had an aircraft carrier surely the ROK was equal in military, economic and technical capability and in its ambitions.

²⁸ Author conducted interview with Admiral An Byeong-tae (April 2011)

however the ROKN has struggled to find a consistent use for it. The difficulties of operating a one class ship are manifest in that maintaining consistent operations with the need for training and refitting is impossible. Additionally it is apparent that ROKN is struggling to find a use for the vessel as it played a limited role in exercises and while considered to transport troops and supplies to Haiti following the earthquake there, which would have been the first time it had fulfilled a core function of its design, it was ultimately not deployed.²⁹ What use the ROKN will have for this ship if more are not built is difficult to gauge. As it is currently assigned to the amphibious squadron it is possible that it may be held in ready reserve if needed. Up to this point this ship has been a failure and until a more concrete role has been found the ROKN will struggle to utilise it effectively.

- Command and Control Ship
- Amphibious Operations
- Support Maritime Air Operations
- PKO/PKF Dispatch
- Disaster Relief
- Counter Terrorism Operations

TABLE 4.6: Defined Missions of LPX. Information from www.navy.mil.kr (retrieved 20/02/2012) in Korean

LST-I/II

The LST programme is aimed at replacing the ROKN's ageing existing amphibious capability. The LST-I platform was developed in the late 1980's with the first being commissioned in 1993 and the final in group of 4 ships in 1999.³⁰ It is capable of carrying 200 troops/15 MBT/4 LCVP. However, while relatively new they are slow (16 Kt top speed) with a limited armament and are potentially vulnerable when landing on opposed shorelines.³¹ There are

²⁹ The Chosun Ilbo, (2010). Gov't Mulls Sending Amphibious Landing Vessel to Haiti. Retrieved from www.english.chosun.com

³⁰ One of these ships has been loaned to the Malaysian Navy for an undetermined period of time.

³¹ Adm. Kim, S.-M (2008) *The Direction of Development in the Navy's Maritime Force Projection* <해군의 해양투사전력 발전방향> Retrieved from Research Institute for Marine Corps Strategy www.rims.kr (05/09/2011)

concrete plans for 4 more LST to be built with DAPA announcing the contract had gone to Hanjin Heavy Industries and tenders have been put out for equipment.³² These are planned for between 2014 and 2018 and while their design is unconfirmed they are expected to be around 7500 tons un-laden with more advanced defensive capabilities, helicopter enabled and with the potential to undertake brigade level operations while operating within a C4I ISR environment which would go some way in meeting the requirements of '*division level landing capabilities*' set out in Naval Vision 2030.³³ This is currently the biggest project underway for the ROKN, and as such it reflects the current administration's desire to improve the ROKN's amphibious capability. It is also a key component in the ROKN's vision of an advanced and more powerful landing force; something which is a signal of the increasing independent operational abilities of the ROK military.

LSF

The landing ship fast capability is filled by two variant nominally called the LSF-I and LSF-II. The LSF-I of which 3 are in service were built in Russia and are based on the *Tsaplya* class ACV. They were delivered in 2005/2006 and are capable of carrying 100 troops at 50 knots.³⁴ The LSF-II class were built in Korea and are LCAC craft designed for use with the DOKDO LPD. As such only two have been constructed, they are each capable of carrying either 150 troops or 1 MBT.³⁵

-Support Amphibious Raids for SOF and Marine Corps

TABLE 4.7: Defined Missions of LSF Information from www.navy.mil.kr (retrieved 20/02/2012) in Korean

³² Keymer, E. (2010). 278 & www.dapa.go.kr

³³ ROKN Headquarters. (2008). 37

³⁴ Saunders, S. (2010). 472

³⁵ Ibid.

THE SUBMARINE PROGRAM

The submarine development program of the ROKN is similar to the KDX programme in that it was designed to be a tiered build of capabilities culminating in an indigenously designed 3000 ton submarine. The project began with the ordering of 3 Type 209 (*Chang Bogo* Class) submarines from HDW in Germany, the first of which would be built in Germany and the second two would be manufactured under licence in kit form in Korea. Two further batches of three were ordered bringing the total number of Type 209 SSK to 9, the last of which was commissioned in 2001.³⁶ Before the last in this class was completed there was a recognition by the ROKN of the limitations of the Type 209 in terms of their undersea endurance, as a result, the second phase of the submarine project was initiated with the ordering of 9 Type 214 submarines from HDW, these would again be built in Korea using components assembled in Germany.³⁷ The Type 214/KSS-2 (*Sohn Wonil* Class) are equipped with AIP providing much greater endurance, more advance sensors and have the ability to launch Harpoon or similar missiles from their torpedo tubes.³⁸ This is a significant step forward in submarine capability for the ROKN; however their fit within the overall force structure and mission of the ROKN is not entirely clear. Their role seems to be multi-functional with both DPRK and regional missions in mind. Indeed submarines are viewed as the ultimate conventional deterrent by the ROKN with Navy Vision 2020 stating '*the submarine will be key for future deterrence power*' and Navy Vision 2030 stating that underwater capabilities

³⁶ Ibid. 460

³⁷ Information from Military Data - Submarines (in Korean) www.navy.mil.kr (retrieved 18/01/2012)

³⁸ It is reported that the AIP systems allows the Type 214 to remain submerged for up to three weeks. Korean manufacturers are to have improved the performance of the Type 214 but there are no verifiable details, additionally Korean media have reported that the ROK have found several problems with the Type 214 design including excessive vibration

were key to '*strategic deterrence and sea denial*'.^{39 40} The current fleet of submarines would be particularly ineffective around the NLL given their size and so it is logical to assume that in terms of the DPRK they are looking at ASW in slightly deeper waters and offensive operations. In a regional context it is apparent that submarines are a force multiplier and allow for the ROKN to be factor in a maritime environment dominated by larger navies.^{41 42}

NAVAL AVIATION

Alongside the surface and subsurface elements the ROKN's air component has undergone force improvement during this period. The deployment of P3-C aircraft began in 1995 and a total of 8 aircraft were delivered by 1996, this maritime surveillance capability was performed in tandem with 5 F406 *Caravan* aircraft. However, acknowledging a significant gap in this capability the ROKN ordered an additional 8 P3-CK in 2010 with the older F406 being reverted to a training role.⁴³ It is clear that these will be used for EEZ and anti-infiltration operations and as such should be seen as part of the overall capability upgrade of the ROKN. Importantly their ability to carry weapons and operate as part of the ROKN's data command network means that they form a central element of the 3 dimensional warfare concept that the ROKN has embraced.

The main ship borne helicopters in the ROKN are the *Lynx* Mk99/99A which perform both an ASW and ASUW role and the 23 in operation seem to be sufficient for the current number of

³⁹ ROKN Headquarters (1999). 96

⁴⁰ ROKN Headquarters (2008). 34

⁴¹ In an author conducted interview, Rep. Park Jin a former naval officer and National Assembly Member suggested that submarines were vital to protect the ROK from encroachment and aggression from neighbouring powers (Interview conducted October 2011). This would suggest that the ROKN recognises the deterrent value of submarines against a qualitative equal but numerically superior threat as posed by Japan of the PRC.

⁴² For an example of the initial reasoning of the submarine building programme see: Republic of Korea Naval Headquarters '*Republic of Korea Navy*' E-book retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr. 266

⁴³ Keymer, E (2010). 278

ships operating at the current time.⁴⁴ Additionally the navy operates 19 UH 60-L for SAR and amphibious operations which are occasionally but permanently assigned to *Dokdo* and as such it can be suggested that they are primarily used for troop transport and not ASW operations. In 2010 a proposal was put forward for the ordering of 8 minesweeping helicopters; however this appears to have been dropped and has been replaced with an order for 8 AW 159 Wildcat Helicopters which are multi-functional maritime platforms which will be assigned to ROKN surface vessels.⁴⁵

The procurement programmes which have been underway since the mid 1980's have dramatically increased the force potential of the ROKN, new capabilities such as area air defence and strike have been added and existing capabilities such as ASW are undergoing modernisation. The addition of these capabilities and the multi-functional nature of the platforms that have been developed suggest that ROKN is looking to develop its total power and increase its offensive and defensive capabilities in terms of deterrence while building an ability to move toward operations aimed at regional threats or geographically distant areas. The *Dokdo* and the *Incheon* class frigate raise some difficult questions for the ROKN however, the construction of only one LPD has severely limited its use and speaks to the difficulties the ROKN has had in maintaining the levels of force procurement it has pursued. This a fact confirmed by the delays in the *Incheon* frigate which has now come into to production due to pressures following the sinking of the Cheonan but was previously delayed indicate the struggle the ROKN has had in consistent procurement which can meet the needs of both

⁴⁴ 2 Lynx helicopters have crashed while on operational duty reducing their number from 25 to 23. See: 'One Dead Three Missing in Crash of Navy Copter' (16/04/2010) Korean Herald retrieved from www.koreanherald.com

⁴⁵ *South Korea Navy Orders eight AgustaWestland AW159 Wildcat Helicopters*. (17/01/2013). Retrieved from www.naval-technology.com

littoral and regional operations. As the force structure will demonstrate the ROKN is attempting to meet both requirements but until a stable source of funding is found this will become extremely difficult.

IV.III ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The organizational and structural development of the ROKN is a reflection of the strategic situation the ROKN finds itself in and the consequence of its force development program since the 1990's. Viewing such developments as unique is problematic as historically despite its inferior status within the ROK defence establishment, the ROKN has altered its command and basing structures as it developed its force structure and created a mission set within the context of the DRPK threat. The current developmental concept is designed to enhance the capabilities of the its new and existing platforms, streamline command and take advantage of the drive toward C4I enabled operations.

The ROKN's structure is based around its Naval Headquarters which heads a number of separate commands; Operations Command, Marine Corp Command, Logistics Command and the Education and Training command. Subordinate to these main commands are a number of offices which administer the ROKN.

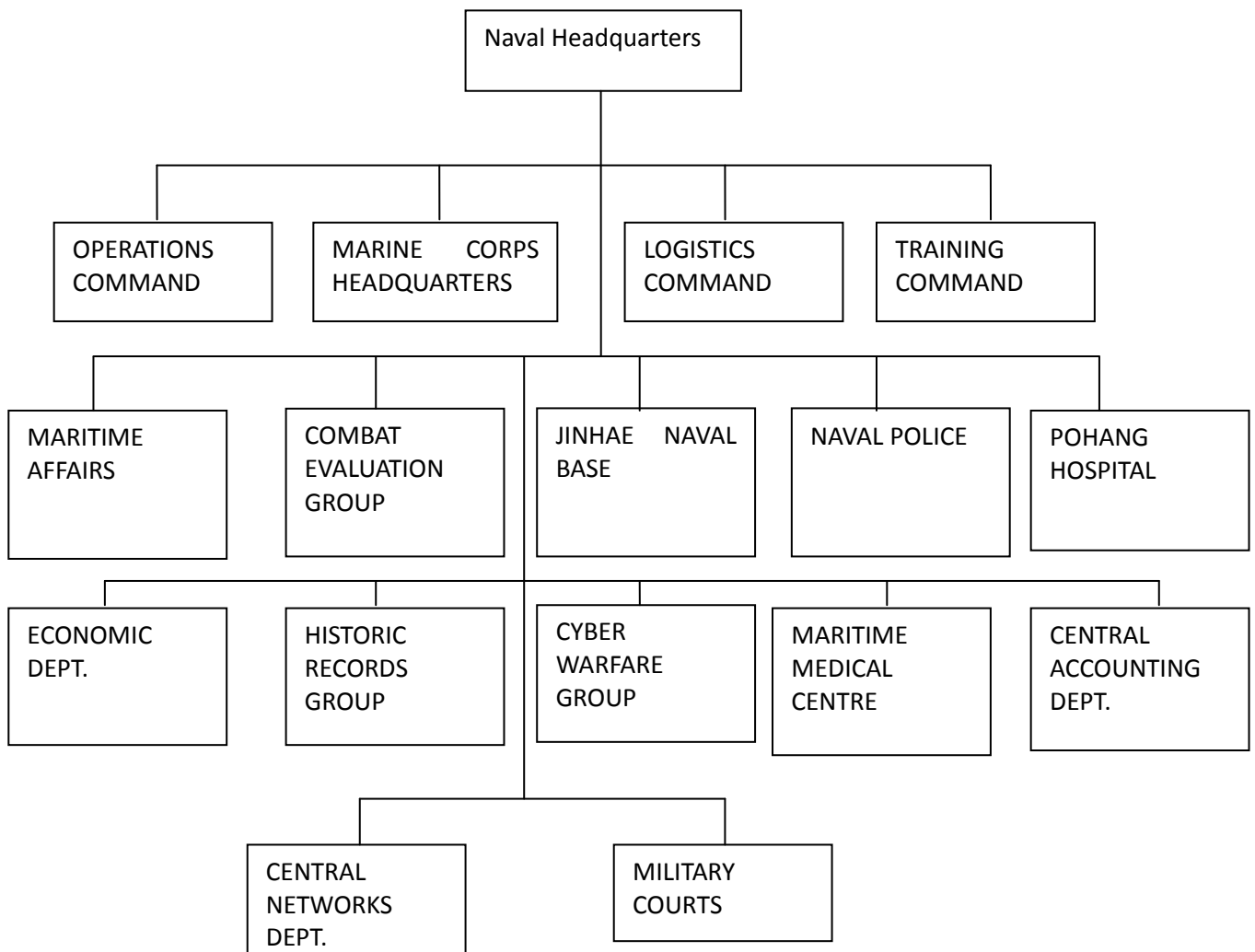


FIGURE 4.1: Command Structure of ROKN Naval Headquarters

Naval headquarters is responsible for the day to day operations of the ROKN, headed by the ROKN's most senior officer; the Chief of Naval Operations, it controls policy, naval development, education & training, logistics, mobilisation of reservists, operational support and other matters related to naval governance.⁴⁶ It has undergone a number of changes to its areas of responsibility since it was set up. The most significant of which in the current period of modernization occurred in 2007, with organizational changes aimed at focusing on

⁴⁶ National Defense Committee (2010) *National Defense Committee Manual* <국회국방위원회편람> Seoul: National Defense Committee of the Republic of Korea. 101

force planning, policy development and reducing the workload on the office of the Chief of Naval Operations.⁴⁷

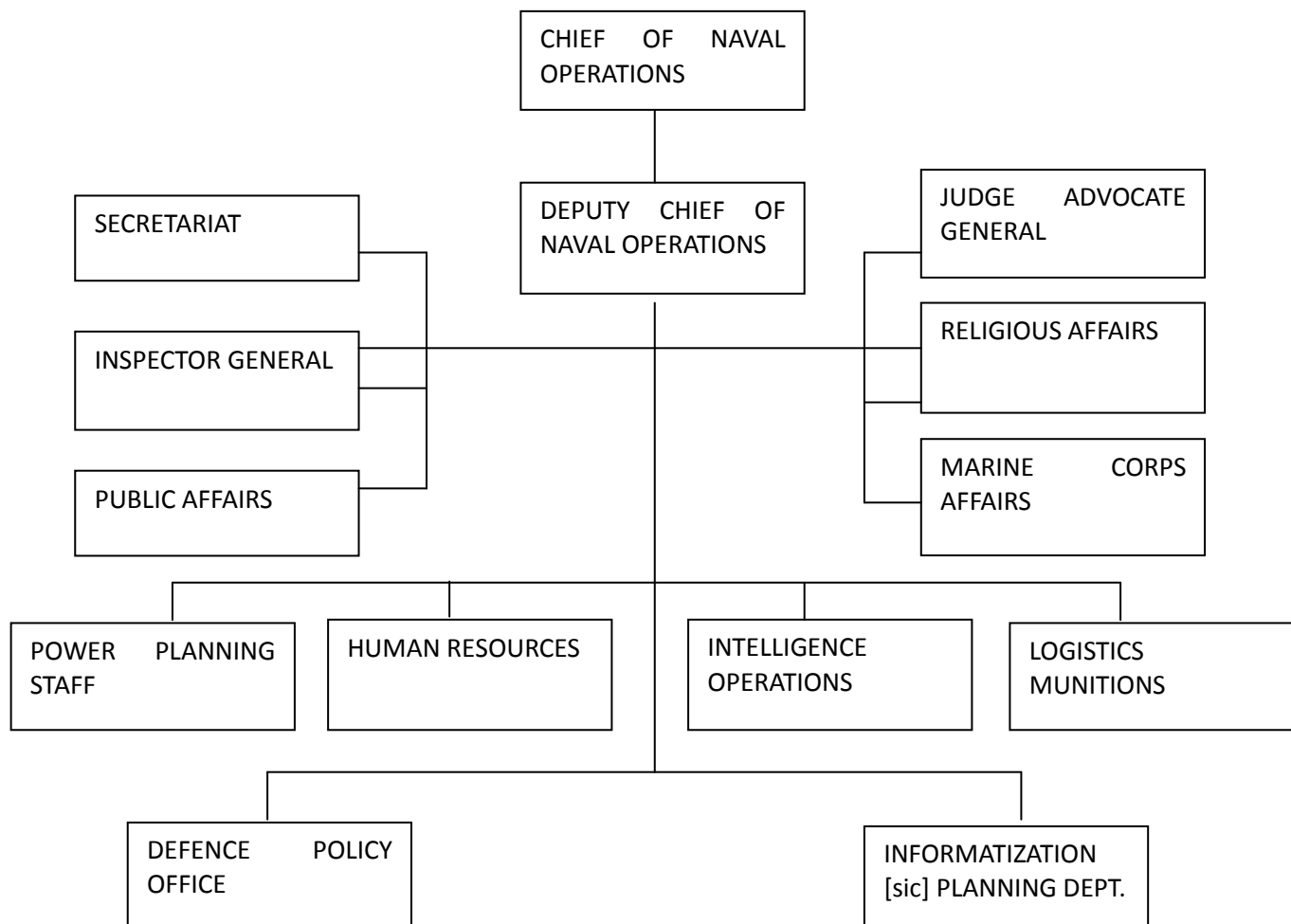


FIGURE 4.2: Command Responsibilities of CNO

Naval Operations Command, led by the Commander in Chief Republic of Korea Fleet was established in 1986. This reorganization replaced the Naval Sector Command system and saw the creation of three Fleet Commands and a number of independent operational flotillas. Primarily, this reorganisation was aimed at responding to the increased maritime threat posed by the KPN and was oriented towards integrating future ROKN force

⁴⁷ Republic of Korea Naval Headquarters, *Republic of Korea Navy*. E-book retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr P.54

improvements and meeting its heightened security responsibilities.^{48 49}

The Naval Operations Command is responsible for general naval operations and has control over a number of large component operations including amphibious, large surface fleet, submarine and aviation operations. Essentially the flotilla's under its direct control are response and specialist units tasked with either pre-planned or emergency operations and as such can be seen as units capable of operations outside the littoral as will be seen with the amphibious flotilla assigning units for PKO and the now 7th Mobile Flotilla sending one of its destroyers on anti-piracy operations.⁵⁰ However, what must be understood is that these blue water operations are the exception rather than the norm and that the current flotilla structure is designed to support the fleet commands and thus is primarily geared towards the ROKN's traditional mission set.

⁴⁸ Cmd. Cho, Young-joo (2003) *'The Naval Policy of the Republic of Korea: From The Beginnings to the Twenty First Century'* Hull: University of Hull (Unpublished Thesis)

⁴⁹ Keymer, E. (2010). 275

⁵⁰ MND (2006). 'Defense White Paper' Seoul: MND.53

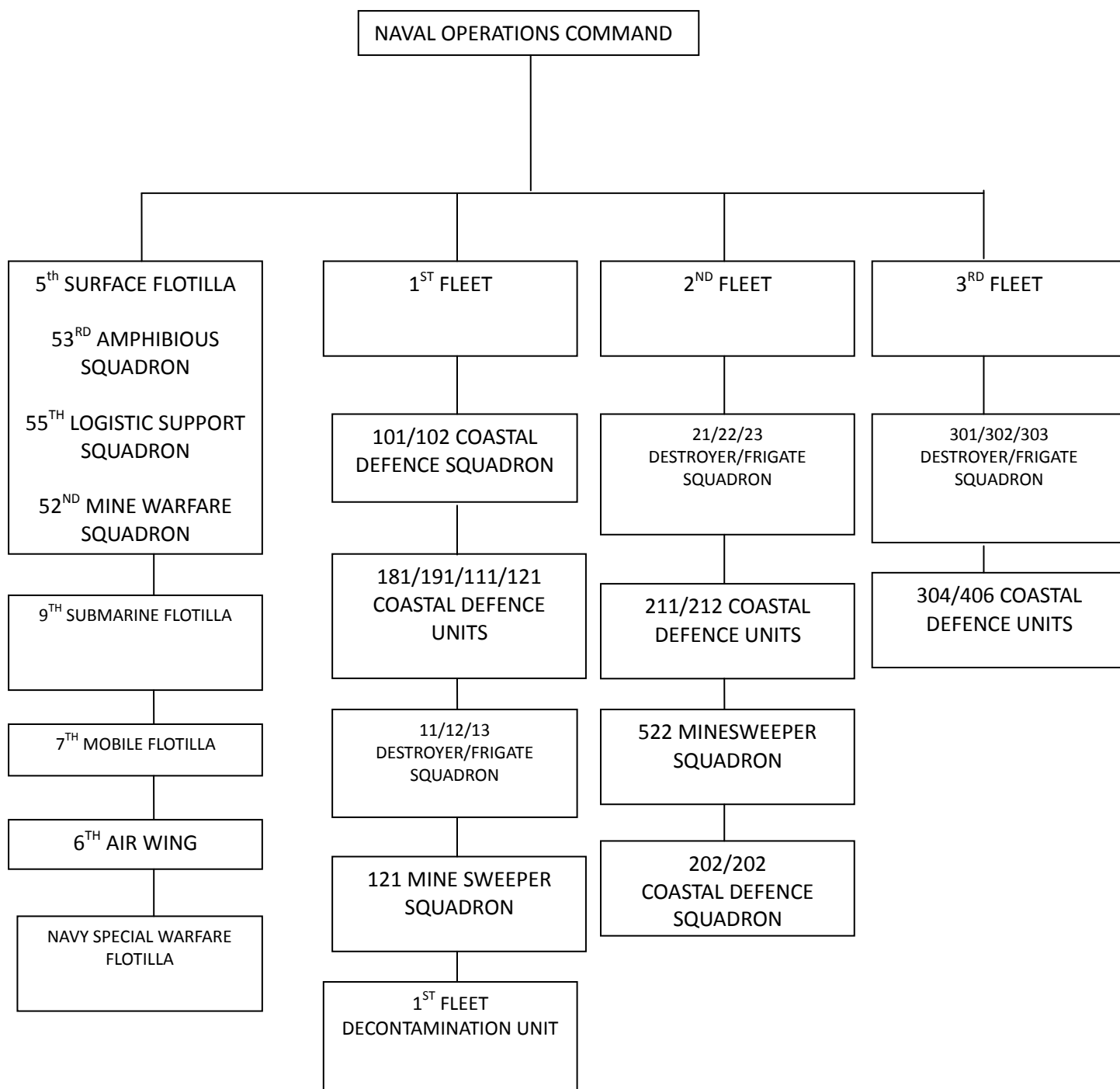


FIGURE 4.3: Force Structure of ROKN.

The three Fleet Commands are the basis of the ROKN's territorial integrity mission. Under Naval Operations Command but individually responsible for the defence of specific geographic locations around the peninsula they primarily consist of 1 destroyer per fleet (at

this time 1 KDX-I per fleet) which act as the flag ship and a number of frigate, patrol boats and minesweepers.⁵¹ As such they are assigned with deterrence and preventing incursions in peacetime and being the initial line of defence in any war time assault scenario. The three fleets have little in the way of offensive capability especially against the shore but this will change as the *Incheon class* are introduced along with their strike weaponry. As will their ASW performance which has been limited by the age and limitations of their existing platforms but will improve as more modern ships are introduced along with their helicopter capability. These units also protect the ROK's EEZ and outlying Islands, an important role considering their disputed status, the issue of resource protection and the emotive issue of Dokdo's sovereignty. The Fleet Commands are designed to be both a permanent deterrent and first responder in both peacetime and wartime. In the event of an attack considering the capabilities of the platforms, their role would be to hold the line and wait for reinforcements to arrive from the components of the Naval Operations Command.

| UNIT | AREA OF OPERATIONS | HOMEPORT |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|-----------|
| 1 st FLEET | EAST COAST (Including Dok-do) | DONGHAE |
| 2 nd FLEET | WEST COAST | PYONGTAEK |
| 3 rd FLEET | SOUTHERN PENINSULA & CHEJU DO | BUSAN |

TABLE 4.8: Areas of Responsibility for the Three Fleet Commands

The structure of providing permanent fleet commands designed for specific areas of responsibility combined with flexible flotilla units, demonstrates the existing operational priorities of the ROKN. The majority of their resources are assigned to the Fleet Commands

⁵¹ Ibid.

and as the platforms tasked to these commands are largely littoral in their focus, it becomes clear that despite claims that the ROK is building a blue water navy, even at the height of the modernisation effort the force structure has overwhelmingly retained its focus on littoral territorial operations.

However, certain structural changes are being made to reflect the integration of new platforms into the fleet. Defence reform plans call for the re-designation of the Submarine Flotilla to Submarine Command level which will give greater operational independence to the submarine fleet and ostensibly to combat the DRPK submarine numerical advantage, it is also aimed at improving the overall level of submarine operations.⁵² This is important as submarine force numbers increase and, assuming the construction of the KSS-III 3000 ton submarine, regional submarine operations are undertaken. This raises an important question regarding the political justification of submarine construction, after the *Cheonan* incident, it was justified as being aimed at the DRPK but as has been pointed out their utility in this area is limited especially considering the nature of DPRK submarines and the littoral environment. The creation of a submarine command seems to be a confirmation that the ROKN is using convenient short term reasoning to gain what has been a long term goal. An additional change first called for in Defence Reform 2020 but seemingly cancelled or at least postponed was the upgrading of the fleets air component from Aviation Wing to an Aviation Command. The cancellation of this transformation is likely due to shifting procurement priorities and delays in acquiring new aircraft, thus not requiring a new command structure.

The organisational structure of the ROKN provides important clues into its priorities. The

⁵² This plan was proposed to be enacted by 2012 but has been delayed. New estimates suggest that the Submarine Command will be operational by 2015. See: MND (2010). 142 & 'Navy to Get New Unit for Submarines' 16/02/2012 retrieved from www.koreaherald.com (20/02/2012)

Fleet Commands with their operations tied to specific locations around the peninsula are the best indicator that the ROKN still maintains a force structure focused on the DPRK but which can also respond to threat to the EEZ. Despite new ships coming online which are multi-functional the reality of their assignment to these commands emphasises that deterrence is the primary mission of the ROKN and until the threat from the North subsides or does not exist it is likely that the majority of the ROKN's forces will continue to be deployed in this fashion.

IV.IV STRATEGIC MOBILE COMPONENT: A MOVE TOWARDS BLUE WATER OPERATIONS?

Central to the ROKN's regional development strategy is the strategic mobile component concept. Potentially capable of both blue water and near sea operations, it is the core organisational concept around which the high end platforms of the ROKN are based, including the KDX-II and KDX-III destroyers. However its development from the time it was proposed and then set out in Navy Vision 2020 to its announcement in 2001 and its subsequent formation in 2010 is symbolic of the uncertainty that underlies certain elements in the ROKN's force build up, while doctrinally it demonstrates the direction the ROKN would like to go it reflects the conflicting mission goals of blue water naval operations the defence of the homeland from direct threat from the DPRK and the requirement of responding to emergencies within the ROK's maritime territory (ostensibly operations against potential encroachment from Japan or the PRC).

The initial operational concept was to create a group of ships which had the twin attributes of mobility and flexibility.⁵³ The mobility concept is born out of the ROK's *'geopolitical factors and history and is the ability to keep a constant presence on one side while having the ability to move to another area to confront any crises'*.⁵⁴ In addition the fleet would have to have the ability to operate independently of home port for up to a month.⁵⁵ This suggests the need for relatively high speed ships, fast at sea-replenishment capability and long distance, high endurance submarines. Flexibility as defined in Navy Vision 2020 proposes that the group be *'able to cope with any type of warfare be it ground or naval'* and thus would mean that the group be multi-mission capable.⁵⁶ This would add a range of capabilities that previously the ROKN could not perform including:

- Wide Area Surveillance/C4I
 - Focused on fighting a fleet in action, this would allow for deep sea strike and the more efficient application of weapons systems.
- Sector Air Defence
 - Concerned with homeland defence, it seems to be focused on protecting the ROK from DPRK missile and air attack, it requires high performance satellite targeting capability for early warning and precision guided munitions for interception.
- Land Attack Capability
 - This would provide the group with the ability to perform both deep strike missions on enemy ground targets through the use of naval variant cruise missiles and more effective support for amphibious and ground operations

⁵³ ROKN Headquarters (1999) .108-109

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Author Conducted Interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae

⁵⁶ ROKN Headquarters (1999) .108-109

- Area/local Air Defence
 - For self protection the fleet would require medium/long distance, medium altitude and point defence capabilities.
- ASW
 - Clearly aimed at defensive operations, the initial format called for both internal ASW capability but also cooperative ASW with the submarine fleet and air assets both navy and air force for operations within the EEZ. This would require greater inter-service command and control capability.
- ASUW
 - A balanced approach utilising all aspects using air/sub/surface capabilities within a C4I environment.⁵⁷

What follows from this concept of flexibility and mobility is a force that has the ability to perform more than one mission on a single deployment. Something that for the ROKN is very important, as it acknowledges its quantitative inferiority compared to its geo-strategic rivals in East Asia and the DPRK, it thus needed a concept that would allow it to apply qualitative equality (in the case of Japan) or superiority (in the case of the PRC or DPRK) over a relatively wide area in a short period of time. While having the potential for success, the mobile fleet concept is a microcosm of the ROKN's operational dilemma. The need for a force capable of such different missions pulls the ROKN in different directions and while Navy Vision 2030 sets out the deterrence mission alongside other operations it does not provide an elaboration in to how the ROKN will cope in terms of force posture in the future.

⁵⁷ ROKN Headquarters (1999). 111-113

UNIT COMPOSITION

The proposed unit structure when the mobile concept was first introduced was one with an aircraft carrier at its centre with screening ships, submarines and support ships. The group would number in total between 6-8 ships and the admiral who developed the concept believed that 3 independent groups would be sufficient for the ROK to perform blue water operations⁵⁸ As initially imagined by the navy, each group would consist of one multipurpose vessel of around 15-20,000 tons, capable of acting as a flag ship with high levels of ISR C4I capability and equipped with VSTOL aircraft. It seems the intention was to develop a light carrier of the same type as the *Invincible* Class of the Royal Navy, however with the addition of battle capability independent of its aircraft (if this was the case a comparison to the *Kiev* class of the USSR might be more appropriate). Screening ships would include at least one air defence ship of around 9000 tons and a number of 6000 ton destroyers. Additionally, submarines would also be included to perform ASW and strategic reconnaissance, these would be of around 3000 tons as the proposal suggested that that would be the minimum requirement for ocean going operations and smaller 1-2000 ton submarines would be used for littoral operations.⁵⁹

The concept that was publically announced in 2001, stressed many of the concepts described in Navy Vision 2020. Details, while typically vague included a structure similar to the one described above including destroyers, *Aegis* capability, submarines and an aircraft carrier. Importantly the unit designation was Strategic Task Fleet. This publically at least did not change, but there was some confusion in press reports regarding the flag ship/command

⁵⁸ Author Conducted Interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae

⁵⁹ ROKN Headquarters (1999). 113-115

and control ships of the each group, some reporting it would be an *Aegis* destroyer, others stating it would be a *Dokdo* class LPD. This was clarified in February 2010 when the first move towards such a group was formalised with the creation of the 7th Mobile Flotilla, such a change in name is significant as it reflects the downscaling of the concept in the relative prominence between fleet and flotilla commands within the ROKN command structure.^{60 61}

The structure of the 7th Mobile Flotilla is also significantly different from the original conception put forward in the 1990's. The new unit is now made up of two squadrons each led by one *AEGIS* KDX-III and supported by three KDX-II destroyers with an additional Aegis Destroyer in reserve, importantly the *Dokdo* is not included within the Mobile Flotilla suggesting that the *Aegis* ships will act as the command platform, and also suggesting a looser force structure that will allow the *Dokdo* which is now assigned to the assigned to the 53rd Amphibious Squadron to be deployed if needed along with submarines and other vessel to support various mission assignments.⁶²

This brings up a number of issues regarding the composition of the fleet, its duties and its ability to meet the goals its original conceivers first set out. The tension between the roles of blue-water operations and homeland defence and thus the requirement for mobility is logically one of the determining factors in the final make-up of the flotilla. As such high

⁶⁰ The Joint Chiefs of Staff Terminology glossary has a defined difference between fleet and flotilla concepts. The fleet is defined as a unit responsible for ongoing missions and the organisation/deployment of both ships and aircraft. The Flotilla is designated as one or more squadrons of destroyers or other ships which as unit is distinct and responsible for both administration and tactical organisation. This would suggest the fleet command would have greater strategic autonomy compared to a flotilla command.

⁶¹ ROKN (2010). *Establishment of the Navy's 7th Mobile Flotilla, The dream of an ocean navy one step closer* <해군 제7기동전단 창설, 大洋海軍의 꿈 한걸음 더> Seoul: ROKN News Release (01/02/2010) retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr (10/01/2012)

⁶² Ibid.

speed unified operations would be essential if the flotilla's squadrons are to be able to operate on one coast and quickly move to another. Thus there is a significant capability gap in cruising range and speed between the current 7th flotilla vessels and other ships that may have been included including the *Dokdo* LPD, *Chun Lee* class AORH and the Type 214 submarines. This disparity between the high speed destroyers and the lower speed submarines, amphibious and support vessels would have had a detrimental impact on the mobility of the flotilla. Additionally the limited number of vessels assigned to the unit raises questions over its ability to perform all of the roles assigned to it given the need to refit, train crews and the potential for some of the vessels being reassigned to other operations (as is the case currently with the deployment to the Gulf of Aden).

However, the apparent focus on mobility has seemingly sacrificed some of the flexibility originally called for. The dropping of the *Dokdo* as a permanent part of the flotilla, might have been necessary due to capability limitations, but is also enforced as she is the only ship in her class and as such would leave a lop-sided force structure which would be ineffective if the LPD was undergoing maintenance or training. The ambiguity of the initial concept regarding deployment missions as pointed out by Admiral Koda in regards to the group's objective being sea control, amphibious operations or both seems to have been somewhat answered by the force levels the ROKN currently has and the structure it has chosen.⁶³ The current structure is aimed at both SLOC protection, and traditional missions suggesting that sea control is the primary mission and that others are subordinate to the requirements of the service

⁶³ Vice Adm. Koda, Y. (2010) The Emerging Republic of Korea Navy, *Naval War College Review* Spring 2010, V.63 (2) Newport: Naval War College Press (13-35). 31

- Deterrence
- SLOC Protection
- Maintaining Readiness Against the DPRK
- Supporting the Foreign Policy of the ROK Government

**TABLE 4.9: Missions of the 7th Mobile Flotilla Information from: Republic of Korea Navy (2011): ‘해군’ [Navy]
Seoul: Republic of Korea Navy**

What these limitations suggest is that the ROKN has not yet developed a permanent blue-water operational force. The failure to develop a new high speed AOE or LPD indicates a commitment to a blue-water capable force but that would struggle to maintain a constant presence in the region. The Mobile Task Flotilla is aimed much more at emergency response, be it within the ROK EEZ, along the NLL which is its primary mission or even within a regional zone down to the Straits of Malacca, but the potential inability to sustain such a fleet would indicate that for now that the ROK lacks the political, economic and doctrinal capacity for long term blue-water operations.

JEJU NAVAL BASE

Symbolic of the ROKN’s acknowledgment of its increasing number of responsibilities is the construction of a new naval base on Jeju-do an Island to the south of the peninsula. Originally conceived in 1993, permission from President Roh, Moo-hyun was granted for its construction in 2007 and building started in 2011 despite widespread protests from residents of the Island who have complained about the militarisation of an Island designated as the Island of peace.⁶⁴ While this issue has been and still is a highly emotive one, garnering large amount of press for the navy both positive and negative, the reasoning behind it suggests that the ROKN is undertaking efforts to improve both its regional and local capability and is indicative of future planned operations and potential threats.

⁶⁴ See Republic of Korea Navy, Jeju Naval Base Website www.jejunbase.navy.mil.kr (in Korean)

The position of Jeju-do along with its natural harbours will, say the ROKN, allow for greater maritime access to areas of strategic importance and will act as a staging post for future blue-water operations.⁶⁵ Importantly, the Jeju base is the proposed future homeport of the 7th mobile flotilla, which when completed would allow the unit to perform its duties more efficiently than it can from its current ports.⁶⁶ This is due to its location which means that it provides quicker access to disputed areas around the peninsula and to the vital SLOC from the Indian Ocean and the Straits of Malacca. This base and its faster access is fundamental to the flexible mobility concept of the Mobile Flotilla allowing it to effectively reinforce the Fleet Commands and react to regional threats on the ROK's SLOC.⁶⁷

- 1- Ensure safe navigation for the SLOC south of Jeju (Vitality these SLOC are the main energy routes from the Middle East).
- 2- Protect the ROK's maritime resources around Jeju (There are suggestions that the seabed around Jeju has large deposits of oil and gas).
- 3- Administer southern waters around leodo rock (this is a disputed area between the PRC, Japan and the ROK but is currently controlled by the ROK)
- 4- Allow for immediate action to protect domestic merchant shipping, the southern waters and the leodo science station

Table 4.10: ROKN Justification for Jeju Naval Base. Information taken from: ROKN(2011): *Navy <해군>* Seoul: Republic of Korea Navy

In recent years as the debate over the construction reached a peak and became a national issue the ROKN began to emphasise the proximity of the base to leodo and the potential for resource exploitation in the region, (see Table 4.10) this coincided with the heightened political tension between the PRC and the ROK over the status of the continental shelf in that area. It also raised questions as to whether the ROKN was developing the base to hedge

⁶⁵ ROKN Headquarters (2008) *Naval Policy Report 2008* <2008년도 해군정책 보고서> Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 40

⁶⁶ The 7th Flotilla is currently based in Jinhae and Busan.

⁶⁷ Republic of Korea Navy, *The Jeju Naval Base must be built for the Republic of Korea and Jeju Island* <제주해군기지는 대한민국과 제주도를 위해서 반드시 건설되어야 합니다> from www.jejunbase.navy.mil.kr

against the PLAN. This justification has remained but ultimately gives the impression of opportunism on the part of the ROKN and the base's supporters in Seoul. The base is in an excellent location to deal with leodo but this problem was not a significant issue when the concept was first proposed. What this facility will allow the ROKN to do is react quickly to emergencies on both sides of the peninsula within the context of the DPRK, respond to encroachment of the ROK's EEZ (including the area around leodo) and will provide faster access to the Southeast Asia. In essence it will allow the ROKN to do exactly what it said when approval for the base was given by President Roh. This base is a piece in the puzzle of ROKN blue water construction but is as much aimed at the DPRK as it is at regional operations.

IV.V MISSION AND DOCTRINE DEVELOPMENT

In examining the official missions of the ROKN, the tension between blue-water operations and homeland security becomes apparent. Divided into peacetime and wartime operations, the modern fleet is intended to perform both tasks however the ability to do so simultaneously can be called into question. What is clear is the level of overlap between missions, an example of this can be seen in deterrence and maritime sovereignty protection involve many of the same platforms and operational, modernisation has done is allow the ROKN to perform such operations more effectively. Also in examining the deployment to the Gulf of Aden the ability of a navy to be a implement of foreign protecting national resources becomes apparent, in that mission the ROKN is performing SLOC protection and military diplomacy simultaneously. However questions must be raised about the division between

operations in the littoral and in the regional and to what extent the ROKN can perform both effectively. A second question that arises is the level of training for regional and global deployments, as will be seen the vast majority of ROKN exercises are conducted in the littoral or with a DPRK scenario in mind.

PEACETIME MISSIONS OF THE ROKN

The missions of the ROKN are split between peacetime and wartime operations. They demonstrate, the ROKN's own naval power and are good indicator to what their overall force development goals are. However, the current force capability and a degree of laxity in definition do demonstrate a certain lack of clarity regarding the achievement of these goals in terms of strategic usefulness and force procurement.

| PEACETIME | WARTIME |
|--|---|
| Deterrence | Sea Control |
| Protection of Maritime Rights and Sovereignty | Military Power Projection |
| Support National Foreign Policy & Enhance Prestige | Protect Maritime Transportation (SLOC protection) |

Table 4.11: Information from: Republic of Korea Navy (2006). Operational Report <업무 보고> in '06 Parliamentary Inspection <'06년 국정감사>. 27-1

A) DETERRENCE

The concept of peacetime deterrence is central to the ROKN's thinking and is the foundation of its operational posture. While not possessing a nuclear deterrent the ROKN believes that by having overwhelming military strength aggression can be avoided or dealt with if necessary. The ROKN '*prevents threats the threats by showing the superiority in strength with manoeuvring defense operations, patrolling and various kinds of training*'.⁶⁸ This is

⁶⁸ ROKN. Republic of Korea Navy <대한민국 해군> E-book. 63

performed on both coasts and in the southern waters around the peninsula and is primarily the preserve of the three Fleet Commands however the larger surface platforms by their presence and participation in exercises are aiming at adding to the deterrent effect of ROKN operations.⁶⁹ Most clearly seen in their activities on the Northern Limit Line the concept implies that the navy has greater power in the area of operations than any potential opposition. As such, the effective operation of such activities was difficult before the force modernization of the 1970s began as before that the KPN was larger and more powerful, thus the ROKN relied on the deterrent effect of being supported by the USN. A modernised ROKN has the ability to deter the KPN independently and while after the sinking of the *Cheonan* the USN increased their operations in the area, this should not be construed as strictly an operational necessity but of naval activity being used as a political message to Pyongyang.

The difficulty in fully understanding this concept is assessing if it is aimed solely at the DPRK or is it also actively employed with the ROK's neighbours in mind. Certainly as has been mentioned the construction of submarines is in part a deterrent within this context as they are the ultimate force multiplier against large surface fleets. However within the majority of ROKN literature on deterrence is firmly placed within the context of the DPRK but the advantage of this mission being the central peacetime operational role is that it is easily transferred from one objective (the DPRK) to others (outside threats) and as the ROKN develops in strength its deterrent value will be effective against the variety of potential threats which surround it.

⁶⁹ ROKN (2010). Navy <조선군> Naval Pictorial Booklet, Seoul: Republic of Korea Navy. 20

B) PROTECTION OF MARITIME RIGHTS AND SOVEREIGNTY

This is an extremely broad peacetime mission and encompasses the majority of issues that have gained traction as security threats in recent years. Included in this mission is the protection of EEZ and SLOC, ensuring that the ROK's maritime sovereignty is protected as such the defence of Dokdo is included as is the prevention of smuggling and other criminal activity⁷⁰. While this mission was first defined in 1987 its importance and extent has expanded as the ROK's maritime interests have grown.

While the patrolling of the ROK's territorial waters and EEZ is performed by the three Fleet Commands who conduct 'all weather patrol activities' to protect disputed areas, the Mobile Flotilla is designated to support them in the case of emergency. Indeed in the role of SLOC protection, this new unit is the primary tool with which the ROKN would perform such a mission. The ROKN as a more capable force has developed its ability to fulfil this mission although it is yet to be seen how they will respond to a number of emergencies occurring concurrently. What this mission demonstrates is the ROK's developing sense of its relationship with sea and the growing acceptance of its importance. However it falls second in priority to deterrence and the threat from the North as such the ability of the ROKN to sustain efficient operations focused on both areas is questionable given the dedication of forces to the deterrence mission.

C) SUPPORT NATIONAL FOREIGN POLICY AND ENHANCE INTERNATIONAL PRESTIGE

This is a vital element to the ROKN's mission set. Indeed, as the reasoning behind initial

⁷⁰ Ibid.

construction approval was to improve the ROK's position within the globalised post cold war community, their interaction and involvement in Peacekeeping Operations (PKO) and dispatch of Peacekeeping Forces (PKF) is of central importance.⁷¹ As will be shown the ROKN has a degree of experience in these missions undertaking operations in East-Timor, Somalia and Afghanistan and also humanitarian relief operations after the 2005 Asian Tsunami. The issue that surrounds these deployments is the small force capacity of its blue-water assets, taking the example of anti-piracy operations off Somalia, while fulfilling its blue water ambitions; it has an impact on its other missions as the ROKN is missing a significant surface element.

Participation in multi-national exercises is also a component of this mission, RIMPAC and other exercises are one of the few ways the ROK can participate in multi-national security cooperation as its other forces are largely tied to the Korean Peninsula. The ROKN also a diplomatic role in undertaking international port visits and fleet training cruises. This area of operations is an important one for the ROKN and while they have one KDX-II on continuous deployment in the Gulf of Aden a continued commitment to large multi-national exercises and other activities would put substantial pressure on the ROKN's large platforms. This mission in many ways is a justification for blue water operations but is tertiary to the two roles specified previously.

⁷¹ This can be demonstrated with the passing of a new PKO bill in the ROK which codified PKO procedures and created standing ground units for PKO missions. See Ministry of National Defence (2010) .384

WARTIME MISSIONS

It is important to note that when the ROKN refers to wartime missions, they are referring to operations against the DPRK. As such these missions should be looked at within the context of the peninsula and its geography, the military balance and influence this constant threat has on ROKN thinking. While it is possible for them to create doctrines for diverse operations in peacetime, war time operational and doctrinal development are naturally aimed north. Of note is the lack of public explanation regarding the wartime role of the modern ROKN within the context of USN involvement in any Korean War Scenario. While the ROK is striving for self-reliance, currently they do not possess the ability to engage in the maritime theatre in a full scale war independently given their lack of aircraft carriers or substantial power projection capability. What they do possess is the ability to achieve a degree of sea control in enemy waters and a higher level in home waters. It is logical to assume that the ROKN's role will be that of first responder, the ability to prevent a DPRK amphibious assault in the early stages of war is a central mission as is the ability to keep its ports and near SLOC open while pre-planned logistic and military support arrives from the US.

Where previously the ROKN existed to support the USN in terms of littoral capability and mine sweeping, their new platforms suggest that they could play a more substantial role in extended war time operations. What exactly these will be is somewhat unclear. Their three main wartime missions show an understanding of what is needed in the modern naval age combined with an acceptance of strategic reality of the ROK's reliance on assistance from the sea.

A) SEA CONTROL

The term as understood by the ROKN is the *'principle mission of the Navy as it maintains a maritime condition that our nation can use territorial waters freely at a specific time and place to achieve an objective by denying the enemy the use of the sea.'*⁷² How this can be achieved is spelt out by the *'defeat of the enemy's military power through the use of naval assets including surface ships, MPC and submarines'*.⁷³ The use of this term as the primary wartime mission of the ROKN demonstrates a degree of confidence in their war-fighting capabilities around the peninsula and is measure of how far the ROKN has developed in recent years, moving from a limited force to one capable of operations on, below or above the surface of the ocean. The considerable issue is that as Addison and Dominy suggest, sea control is extremely difficult in the littoral and there is no specific way assess sea control capability.⁷⁴ What can be ascertained is the ROKN's conventional superiority over KPN forces and the reality that sea control is a requirement if they are to reach what the USN defines as *'credible combat power'*.⁷⁵

B) MILITARY POWER PROJECTION

The second requirement as stated by the USN is power projection capability. Explained by the ROKN as,

'the exercise of military power which directly affects the land from the ocean. This Navy's precise and high density offense is used at a chosen time and place. To do this

⁷² Republic of Korea Navy (2010).22

⁷³ ROKN. Republic of Korea Navy <대한민국 해군> E-book. 63

⁷⁴ Capt. Addison Jr. V.G & Cmdr. Dominy, D (2010). Got Sea Control?. Retrieved from United States Naval Institute Website. www.usni.org/magazines/proceedings/2010-03/got-sea-control

⁷⁵ United States Naval War College (2010). Naval Doctrine Publication :1 Naval Warfare. Rhode Island: USNWC.26

*sea control is needed in advance and the navy provides high mobility bases and the protection of maritime transportation routes to support military activities’.*⁷⁶

This definition of power projection is quite broad and seems to cover both the use of ordnance from the sea and amphibious operations. In order to achieve this, the ROKN has substantially increased its strategic strike capability with the arming of the KDX-III destroyer and *Incheon* frigates with cruise missiles. This is a development in capability and doctrine which in the past viewed naval power projection as being aimed solely at supporting defensive landings at sea and contributing to the halting of any DPRK assault.⁷⁷ Additionally, there has been an increase in amphibious capability with the deployment of *Dokdo*, albeit only one vessel and the planned construction of larger LST class vessels. This will allow the ROKN to deploy the Marine Corps more effectively and provide a mobile sea base for land operation⁷⁸ The ROKN’s amphibious operations while most likely being recovery or counter attacks are aimed at taking enemy facilities, pinning enemy forces and strategic diversion. The issue that arises is that currently despite developmental efforts, the ROKN’s amphibious capability is still limited by capacity and by survivability as such the successful completion of future improvement programs is essential for the ROKN to be able to carry out this mission effectively.

c) PROTECT MARITIME TRANSPORTATION

This is a classic wartime role for the ROKN. Whilst not being specific it is likely given the involvement of the USN that maritime transportation protection by the ROKN will be in the

⁷⁶ Republic of Korea Navy (2010). 22

⁷⁷ Republic of Korea Navy Headquarters (1999). 95

⁷⁸ Republic of Korea Navy (2010). 22

littoral, protecting ports, near sea SLOC and coastal transportation. As such convoy duty, anti-submarine patrols and mine sweeping will be essential for this mission.⁷⁹ Thus, while the ROKN has always had a degree of capability in these areas, its force improvement programs have increased this capability. For anti-submarine efforts, the operational focus is on 3 Dimensional operations with submarine, ASW aircraft and surface ships working together.⁸⁰ The ROKN's minesweeping capability is already substantial however with approval of new mine sweeping vessels in 2010 it should increase further.

OPERATIONAL DEPLOYMENTS: SUGGESTIONS OF BLUE WATER AMBITIONS:

The dispatch of a ROKN vessel to the coast of Somalia in March 2009 was an important step for both the navy and the ROK as it moved towards a more advanced naval role. While not the first international role for the ROKN (see below) it was the first time the ROKN had operationally participated in advanced multi-national operations outside of the training environment, also it was the first deployment that was non-supply oriented with previous missions aimed at supplying operations rather than undertaking them.

The four major missions the ROKN had undertaken before the deployment to the coast of Somalia, were supply and resupply to efforts to multinational force and PKO in which Korean ground forces were involved. The first of which took place with the dispatch of army and Marine Corps personnel to Vietnam.⁸¹ The navy contributed a number of LST and LSM to provide logistical and transportation support to operations underway in the country. Between 1965 and 1973 34 LST and 26 LSM were dispatched for operations transporting

⁷⁹ ROKN (2010).22

⁸⁰ Republic of Korea Naval Headquarters. *Republic of Korea Navy*. E-book. 64-66

⁸¹ Ibid. 45

over 562,000 metric tons of supplies during this period.⁸² While significant, in that it was the first international ROKN deployment, its purpose was to fight communism and support their U.S. ally. As such the next deployment to East-Timor should be viewed differently as it fulfilled the wider defence objective of greater participation in UN sanctioned operations and marked the ROKN's first involvement in peacekeeping. So while on a grander strategic scale this deployment was different, the operational aspect was quite similar. Deployed between March 2000 and January 2002 one LST was assigned to provide logistic and humanitarian support to ROK and international PKF.⁸³ The same can be said for the Afghanistan dispatch. As part of the international response to the September 11th attacks, the ROK government dispatched medical and supply teams for the invasion and occupation of Afghanistan as part of the UN mandated force. Again one LST was utilised which carried out over 17 resupply missions.⁸⁴ Finally, in 2005 the ROK dispatched two further LST to provide humanitarian relief after the 2005 Asian Tsunami. These transported relief supplies and soldiers aimed at providing assistance to the affected populations in Indonesia and Sri Lanka.⁸⁵ Too much should not be read into the limited nature of these deployments, while the ROKN did not participate in combat missions it did not have the capability to do so in the case of Vietnam and the ROK government has been reluctant to deploy assets on aggressive on peace support operations as such one of the few capabilities the ROKN could deploy that would have use was amphibious vessels used as method of supply. This was to change with the deployment of a ship to aid anti-piracy operations in the Gulf of Aden. New capabilities, both in terms of platform number and ability has allowed the ROK to participate more fully

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Ibid. 91

⁸⁴ Ibid. 92-93

⁸⁵ Ibid. 91

in international maritime operations and so places the ROKN in an important role in growing ROK international PKO and security operations.

Like its neighbours Japan and the PRC, the ROK authorised the dispatch of a single KDX-II destroyer on rotating 4-5 month deployments to international anti-piracy task force in the Gulf of Aden.⁸⁶ While not being resupplied by the ROKN at sea the mission has demonstrated the ROKN's ability to operate on extended deployment. As such this dispatch should be viewed as the first blue-water operation of the ROKN. From an operational aspect, the deployment can be seen as a success with the defence of a number of ships, the rescue of a Korean crewed cargo ship and the eventual command of the task force, the first non-US command given since it was created. Additionally, the security situation during the 2011 Libyan civil war resulted in the need for ROK citizens to be evacuated. The flexibility provided by the multi-mission capable KDX-II allowed the ROK to successfully demonstrate its capacity to operate in the international arena in the same vein as other developed maritime nations.

This mission signifies the potential uses of a blue-water capable fleet and is the culmination of a long process of development within the ROKN, in terms of training, platform construction and doctrinal thinking. It is likely that the ROKN will be called upon to perform further missions in either PKO, humanitarian or security roles, given the increasing commitment to PKO and Multi-national Force missions demonstrated by previous governments. The problem that exists, is the limited number of platforms available and the subsequent reduction in capability for other operations around the Korean Peninsula (the

⁸⁶ See: National Defense Committee (2009). *Review of the Motion for the Dispatch of Military Forces to Somalia Waters* <국군부대의 소말리아 해역 파견 동의안 검토> Seoul: National Defence Committee.

Dispatch of the KDX-II reduces the capability of the Mobile Task Flotilla). This can be seen with the *Dokdo* which is tasked with humanitarian and relief operations, but as the only ship of its kind in the fleet, its amphibious power projection role being crucial to deployment in an emergency on the peninsula, the loss of it would significantly reduce the ROKN's operational capability. This is symptomatic of the tension between blue-water international roles and the need to maintain force capability in home waters. Thus in order to continue this role and maintain a strong security posture, procurement and mission priorities in the future will have to be resolved.

TRAINING: RETAINING THE FOCUS ON THE DRPK

Unlike the dispatch to the Gulf of Aden the training regime is a contra-indication to a move toward blue-water operations. ROKN training takes place on a service, joint service, US Alliance and multinational basis. The focus of the training is overwhelmingly aimed at peninsular war scenarios. This is some of the firmest evidence of the ROKN while looking toward regional operations having to maintain local focus.

A) INDIVIDUAL SERVICE LEVEL

Independent training conducted by the ROKN takes two forms, component training and manoeuvre training. The former is aimed at specific areas of naval warfare, including anti-submarine, mine warfare, amphibious and submarine warfare.⁸⁷ Manoeuvre training is a multi-platform exercise aimed at improving the ROKN's 3 dimensional warfare techniques.⁸⁸

⁸⁷ MND (2010). 196

⁸⁸ Various Defence white Papers have described this training's objectives as slightly different, ranging from sea-denial (blocking SOF infiltration to annihilation and sea control to early command of the sea operations.

⁸⁹ While not publically identified as being solely for defensive measures against the DPRK, given that they are specifically aimed toward local maritime defence indicates that blue-water operations are not currently a training priority.

B) INTER-SERVICE LEVEL

The major inter-service exercise is the *HOGUK* Exercise which in its current form is a combined arms exercise at the theatre level. It has multiple aims including strengthening operational performance, testing weapons systems, enhancing joint operations and verification of the efficacy of operational plans.⁹⁰ This exercise is aimed at wartime scenarios involving the DPRK.

C) US-ALLIANCE

The majority of USN-ROKN exercises take place to cover emergency situations on the peninsula. While joint training happens at regular intervals major exercises include Combined Landing Operation Training, which focuses on amphibious assault, ground support operations and maritime manoeuvres. Additionally, the US holds a number of major combined joint exercises with the ROK armed forces, the major one being RSOI/Foal Eagle (previously Key Resolve/Foal Eagle). This is an annual event combining combined post and field training exercises. While aimed at an overall response to war on the peninsula, naval units from the ROKN and the 7th fleet are heavily involved integrating in the Combined Landing Exercise to perform large scale USN-ROKN operations.⁹¹ Finally, after the sinking of the *Cheonan*, the USN and ROKN increased their operational training performing at the time

⁸⁹ MND (2010). 196

⁹⁰ Ibid. 412

⁹¹ Ibid.

of 'Invincible Spirit' exercises' off both coasts of Korea aimed at both demonstrating to the DPRK that the such actions will not be accepted again and at improving joint warfare capabilities.⁹² Included in the training, is anti-submarine, surface and anti air warfare and readiness training. Importantly, the 7th mobile flotilla demonstrated its intended capability by joining manoeuvres on one coast and then to the other.⁹³ However, it is clear that these exercises are aimed at perfecting alliance defence and offer little in the way of regional or blue water operational training. Such exercises have noticeably increased since the sinking suggesting that the ROKN and the USN have refocused their efforts on performing littoral operations and countering possible threats from the KPN.

D) MULTI-NATIONAL TRAINING

It is in multi-national training that the ROKN has shown its capability for varied operations. Its main multi-national exercise is participation in the bi-annual RIMPAC exercise. This is multi-country/multi mission exercise, involving both offensive and defensive training, SLOC protection and weapons exercises. The ROKN first sent observers in 1988 and participated with vessels in 1990. Since then the ROKN has steadily increased its contribution from for example deploying one frigate in 1990 to both destroyers and submarines in 2006.⁹⁴ In many ways RIMPAC has been used by the ROKN as indicator of its status amongst the world's top navies. The extent to which it demonstrates a commitment to regional operations or otherwise is debatable, while RIMPAC does allow the ROKN to train for multitude of

⁹² Garamone, J. (2012) 'U.S.-Korean Defense Leaders Announce Invincible Spirit' retrieved from www.defense.gov

⁹³ Hyun, M(2010) 'South Korea's Blue-water Ambitions' from 'The Diplomat' retrieved from www.the-diplomat.com (05/5/2011)

⁹⁴ Republic of Korea Naval Headquarters. Republic of Korea Navy. E-book retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr 94-95

missions and interact with navies in a way that would not normally be possible, it should not be over emphasised as an indicator of future ROKN operations, the predominance of littoral oriented exercises precludes that assumption. Other multi-national exercises include the tri-annual Pacific Reach submarine rescue exercise, the Western Pacific Mines Counter Measures Exercise (WP MCMEX) and a bi-annual SAREX exercise with Japan.⁹⁵ The overriding function behind such participation while undoubtedly having an operational element is demonstrating the ROK's ability to be a normalized security actor on the international stage.

What can be drawn from the gambit of exercises the ROKN participates in is that the majority are aimed at improving its war fighting capabilities around the peninsula. Its single and joint service exercises demonstrate that the operational focus remains pointed firmly north and that this is a situation that must be resolved before true blue-water operations can be undertaken. While the involvement in multi-national missions does demonstrate increasing abilities to operate on the international stage, it also highlights the lack of platforms the ROKN has to undertake such exercises. By sending one destroyer to operate at RIMPAC, it reduces the capacity of their mobile flotilla dedicated to responding to emergencies by a sixth assuming that all others are operational. This is the fundamental concern regarding the creation of a modern blue water navy. The mission set as defined above calls for multiple capabilities, many of which must be focused on home waters, with limited capacity to spare the most powerful ships the ROKN's blue-water or regional aspirations will be to some extent hamstrung until procurement and operational priorities

⁹⁵ MND (2010). 196 & 413

change. A concern that the ROKN has acknowledged in its requests for further surface ships (see below).

IV.VI MOVING FROM THE PRESENT TO THE FUTURE

The dilemma of developing and funding a navy that can operate in the littoral and the regional was thrown into sharp focus with the sinking of the *Cheonan* in 2010. After the sinking the navy came in for significant criticism and the logic of blue water construction was called into question, throwing the entire project into doubt. This had an effect on procurement priorities as the government and the military establishment diverted money to improving the ROKN's littoral warfare capability. This represented a misunderstanding of the ROKN's intentions and while in part it was a move to address the threat posed by the asymmetric submarine forces of the KPN, it was also politically motivated. What they are trying to achieve is a balanced force structure in which a regional capability exists alongside a capability which could be used against the DPRK when needed, the task flotilla is a significant example of this, something which can respond to emergencies around the peninsula and in the region but which would not have a permanent blue water presence.

The difficulties arise with the limited nature of the platforms the ROKN currently possesses. With only 9 destroyers the ROKN will find it difficult to meet its international commitments and maintain a national presence taking into account training and maintenance cycles. The navy seems to understand this and in 2009 they called for the construction of 6 more *Aegis* ships, this number has since increased to 15 providing an insight into the weaknesses of the

ROKN current force numbers, however while some money has been put toward the project no official numbers or definite confirmation has been forthcoming. Other projects are going ahead, the PKX and *Incheon* classes are currently under construction and approval has been given for construction of the LST-II, and fast landing ships. These vessels are clearly aimed at the littoral however in recent months there has been a political move to develop the ROKN's naval power once again over the long term. The KSS-III submarine which will be 3000 tons and will be made of 9 vessels in the class has been confirmed with the first due to be launched in 2020. However the ROKN's plan for new destroyers indicates that these will not be constructed for at least another ten years. The problem is budget, how can the ROKN develop multiple platforms given their extreme cost and on-going budgetary pressures.⁹⁶ And as history has demonstrated projects for the ROKN are often delayed or downsized as the political and economic winds shift or the geo-strategic needs change.

The continual planning for an increasingly powerful and multifunctional navy is indicative of a naval hierarchy dedicated to blue water operations underwritten by high-technology platforms. However it is an organisation pulled in many directions. As this chapter has highlighted the ROKN has attempted to develop a balanced force structure where blue water platforms are deployed in a fashion where they have a role in the littoral and the regional and where platforms dedicated to the littoral are modernised or replaced. In doing this the ROKN has added to its capabilities but has struggled to meet the diverse nature of its missions and complete projects in the face of budgetary problems and shifting priorities as was indicated after the events of 2010. The ROKN is a victim of circumstance with too many

⁹⁶ *Korea to Boost Naval Capacity Amid Regional Arms Race.*(13/0513). The Chosun Ilbo. Retrieved from www.english.chosun.com

missions to fulfil and not enough money or platforms to meet the demand. Currently it is a force with blue water capability but not with the ability to sustain it over the long term. This is a situation that will remain as long as the need for deterrence and littoral operations exist in an environment where the foe is unpredictable and the possibility of a maritime clash is ever-present.

CHAPTER 5

THE U.S.-ROK ALLIANCE

V.I INTRODUCTION

The U.S.-ROK alliance has played a significant role in the defence development and strategic posture of the ROK since the end of the Korean War. Following the war the U.S. retained control over ROK military operations and provided not only the majority of the equipment for the ROK's armed forces but also bankrolled and set the strategic direction of the ROK armed forces. In doing so the U.S. based the ROK's military posture on the policy of deterrence and limited it to a defensive role in order to reduce the burden of having U.S. troops on ROK soil while holding the line against the communist land threat posed by the DPRK. For the ROKN this meant that as the U.S. viewed them as a minor player in the peninsular strategic environment, they would not receive large amounts of advanced equipment and would operate in a restricted role with the majority of naval operations to be conducted by the USN if needed.

This absolute reliance began to change in the late 1960's as a combination of a growing ROK economic capability and the burden of the Cold War on the U.S. led the ROK into pursuing a degree of independent capability and reducing its dependence on U.S. money, if not equipment for its force development. While this did not result in a change in operational

direction for any of the ROK armed forces, it did mean that they could pursue different avenues of procurement and as a result for the ROKN a degree of independent force development began between 1974 and 1992.

In later years up to the present day the alliance has undergone more substantial changes as the ROK began to take more responsibility with the ultimate aim of taking the lead role in their own defence through the OPCON transfer which is scheduled for 2015. Additionally the alliance is transforming into a more cooperative one on the international stage, as the ROK's global and regional interests match those of the U.S. on many levels. What these changes have meant since the end of the Korean War is that the ROK has transitioned from being a receiving nation to a contributing one in terms of the alliance. It has also moved from having no defence infrastructure to building a relatively advanced industrial capability supported by an entirely self funded defence budget.

It is within this context that this chapter will analyse how the U.S. and the changes to the alliance have impacted on ROKN modernisation. Through a chronological examination of the U.S.-ROK alliance, the development of ROK military procurement and the building of an independent yet still reliant defence industry and by looking at the U.S. role in ROKN operations as whole, this chapter concludes that the U.S. has had a greater indirect rather than direct influence on ROKN modernisation. While not encouraging or significantly discouraging a move toward blue-water operations, the overarching ROK-U.S. defence relationship has impacted on ROKN procurement and in recent years drawn the two navies closer together as the ROKN has modernised and the U.S. has realised the value of having an

additional capable and interoperable naval partner in the Pacific.

V.II POST KOREAN WAR – THE ROLE OF THE U.S. AND ROK STRATEGY

The signing of the armistice on the 27th of July 1953 brought the 3 year Korean War to an end and solidified the division of the peninsula between North and South. With the conflict in a form of semi-permanent hiatus, the ROK was left in a state of economic and infrastructural ruin resulting in the need for massive international aid to both rebuild and defend the ROK from further aggression.¹ This forced the then president Syngman Rhee into negotiations with the U.S. in order to secure financial and security commitments for the ROK. The result of the negotiations was the Mutual Defence Treaty which was signed in October 1953 and came into force in November 1954. This treaty reflected the security and strategic concerns of the United States and the relatively weak negotiating position of the ROK. While the treaty recognised mutual security interests in the Pacific, under Article 3 it did not guarantee a military response in the event of an attack on each other's territory. Additionally, the treaty granted the U.S. the right, but did not compel it, to place its military forces on and around the ROK's territory (Article 4). These two articles placed the U.S. in a position of great strength over the ROK in as much as it allowed them to dictate the levels of aid and type of assistance it would grant. At the same time they provided a degree of insurance against the

¹ The ROK was left with over 2 million dead and wounded soldiers and civilians, while their major cities and industrial bases were significantly damaged.

ROK breaking the armistice and restarting the war with the DPRK.² Such a concern is evident in a 1954 report to the NSC which stated '*the U.S. would not support in any way ROK unilateral action [against the DPRK] and furthermore would not be deluded by efforts to conceal such action*'.³ Essentially, as a result of the treaty the U.S. presence on ROK territory was a trip wire arrangement with a U.S. military response to a DPRK attack being only ensured as long as U.S. troops were endangered.

Importantly, while the Treaty set out the above terms, the Minutes of the Treaty agreed in 1954 reinforced the role of the U.S. in the ROK's economic and security development and demonstrates the ROK's complete reliance at this time on its American ally. The minutes confirmed that the ROK armed forces would be placed under the control of the United Nations Command (which was essentially a U.S. command), and set exacting limits on the amount of military aid that the U.S. would provide, setting out the troops numbers that the U.S. would support, the types of equipment that would be supplied (which would be decided by U.S. commanders) and the training that would be provided.⁴ An example of the level of control that the U.S. had at this point is the conditions set out for the ROKN, whose ships were to be provided on a 5 year loan basis and could be withdrawn if the U.S. '*in its own discretion should decide that such vessels are no longer being used to serve the best interests of both the Korean and the United States Governments*'.⁵ This was born out of the

² Second Progress Report by the Operations Coordinating Board to the National Security Council on NSC 170/1: United States Objectives and Courses of Action with Respect to Korea, 29 December 1954, (1984) *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1952-54, XXV, Korea Part 2*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. 1943-1956

³ Ibid. 1948

⁴ The Department of the Army to the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command (Hull), September 15 1954, (1984) *FRUS, 1952-54, V. XV, Korea Part 2*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. 1875-1881

⁵ Ibid. 1880

previously highlighted concern that the ROK would act independently against the DPRK, restarting a war that the U.S. did not want and the fear that the ROK would undermine the U.S. presence in the region through aggressive action towards Japan or even the PRC.⁶ A concern that is exemplified in the comments of Secretary Dulles who stated,

*'The Koreans were hostile to the Japanese and wished to additional naval craft to drive Japanese fishing vessels away from areas that the Koreans claim as theirs...we should not give mobile forces to countries are not the same as our own, who are hostile to their neighbours and who have a vested interest in starting a third world war.'*⁷

The consequence of these agreements in the formative years of the ROK and its armed forces was a psychological and military reliance on the U.S. that was underpinned by the ROK's economic weaknesses the security situation on the peninsula and a U.S. desire to restrain the ROK in relation to possible future military ambitions.

Evidence of this can be seen in the level of assistance provided by the U.S. in this period up to the early 1970's. The U.S. having withdrawn, against ROK wishes, 5 infantry and 1 marine division between in 1954-1955, left only 2 infantry divisions but transferred the equipment from the departing units to the ROKA and funded as compensation for the reduction in force levels an increase in ROK divisions from 14-19 in 1954.⁸ At this time the U.S. was responsible for providing virtually all of the equipment, supplies and funding for the ROK armed forces and in fitting out ROK units it allowed the U.S. drawdown its own forces on the

⁶ Memorandum of Discussion at the 208th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 29 1954, (1984) *FRUS. 1952-54, V. XV, Korea Part 2*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. 1854

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ Kim, J-I. (1996). *The Future of the U.S.-ROK Military Relationship*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd. 34

peninsula. This was done through a combination of equipment transfers as mentioned above, the Military Assistance Program (MAP) grants and the International Military Training Program (IMET). And as Kim points out, even by the late 1960's the ROK were providing less than 25% of the ROK's overall defence budget.⁹

Being financed by the U.S. and having operational and procurement decisions made in Washington under the recommendations of the U.S. commander in Korea significantly hampered the ROK military's own independence. A fact demonstrated In 1959 when the U.S. modified the Minutes of the Treaty and reduced the agreed personnel levels of the ROK armed forces from 720,000 to 630,000, specifically, setting out a force division of 18 active and 10 reserve army divisions, a 60 vessel strong ROKN and a 10 squadron strong ROKAF.¹⁰ This number could not be exceeded and small variations if desired by the ROK would have to be agreed through consultation with U.S. commanders in Korea.¹¹ Also the U.S. set out the parameters of the ROK military's operational concerns, stating that they need only focus on the DPRK, indicating that wider anti-communist efforts in the region, namely against the PRC and the Soviet Union were under the preserve of the U.S..

U.S. policy through its huge power over the ROK armed forces would have a significant impact on the ROKN and would affect it in its development and its ability to conduct operations. After the Korean War, the ROKN set out fanciful force requirements for its post war development. This programme set out a need for carrier capability and was defined

⁹ Ibid. 35

¹⁰ NOTE BY THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY TO THE NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL ON U.S. POLICY TOWARD KOREA (1994) *FRUS, 1958-60, V. XXIII, Japan; Korea*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. 571-580

¹¹ Telegram from the Commander in Chief, United Nations Command to the Department of State, April 4 1958. (1994) *FRUS, 1958-60, V. XXIII, Japan; Korea*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. 452

around the forces used by the UN forces during the War.¹² The reality however was that, having no monetary capability to purchase ships or ability to design and build them indigenously, the ROKN was totally reliant on the U.S. for its force development. The U.S. viewed the ROKN as relatively inconsequential within the grand scheme of its defence plans for the ROK. Its emphasis was on developing the ROK ground forces so that it could reduce its troop levels in the country and as has been argued leaving operations in the wider East Asian region to its own forces. It did recognise however the need of the ROK to patrol its own territory with a view to deterring the DPRK and was willing to provide the ROK with additional naval craft once a fishing agreement with the Japanese had been reached.¹³ The vessels provided the ROKN were given on a loan basis and were aimed at allowing the ROKN to maintain a force level of just under 60 vessels. As Table 5.1 demonstrates the majority of the ships provided were of an antiquated nature, most having served in WWII. The vessels provided also give an indication of the operations the USN intended the ROKN to undertake. The focus on small patrol craft and landing ships demonstrate U.S. efforts to limit the offensive potential of the ROKN and ensured that they only had a littoral capability aimed at countering the DPRK and not operating within the region. While the ROKN were allowed to operate independently (although under overall operational command of the U.S.) they still relied upon the USN to provide massive support in a time of war and had no capability to operate away from their coast or undertake missions that would jeopardise the armistice or unbalance the delicate regional security architecture.

¹² Cdr. Cho, Y. J. (2003) *The Naval Policies of the Republic of Korea: From the beginnings to the 21st Century*. (Unpublished PhD Thesis: University of Hull). 78

¹³ Memorandum of Discussion at the 208th Meeting of the National Security Council, July 29 1954, (1984) *FRUS, 1952-54, V. XV, Korea Part 2*. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. 1854

| YEAR | DELIVERED | TYPE | NUMBER | CLASS |
|------|-----------|---------------|--------|---|
| 1949 | 1951-1956 | Landing Ship | 11 | LST-I |
| 1949 | 1950 | Patrol Craft | 1 | PC-456 |
| 1949 | 1950 | Minesweeper | 6 | YMS |
| 1950 | 1950 | Patrol Craft | 4 | PC-456 |
| 1950 | 1950-1951 | Frigate | 4 | Tacoma |
| 1951 | 1951 | Cargo Ship | 5 | FS-135 |
| 1951 | 1952-1959 | Landing Ship | 12 | LST-I |
| 1952 | 1953 | Gunboat | 5 | LSSL |
| 1954 | 1955-1956 | Landing Ship | 12 | LSM |
| 1954 | 1955 | Corvette | 4 | PCE |
| 1954 | 1955 | Tanker | 1 | YO |
| 1955 | 1956 | Frigate | 2 | Cannon |
| 1955 | 1955-1956 | Cargo Ship | 2 | YO |
| 1955 | 1955-1956 | Minesweeper | 6 | YMS |
| 1958 | 1959 | Minesweeper | 3 | Adjutant |
| 1959 | 1960 | Landing Craft | 1 | LCU-501 |
| | | | | |
| 1960 | 1960 | Gunboat | 1 | LSM(R) |
| 1960 | 1960 | Cargo Ship | 1 | FS-135 |
| 1960 | 1963-1965 | Landing Craft | 3 | LCU-501 (produced in South Korea) |
| 1960 | 1960 | Patrol Craft | 2 | PC-461 |
| 1960 | 1961 | Corvette | 3 | PCE |
| 1961 | 1963 | Minesweeper | 2 | Adjutant |
| 1962 | 1963-1968 | Destroyer | 3 | Fletcher |
| 1962 | 1962 | Tug | 2 | ATA |
| 1963 | 1963 | Frigate | 1 | Rudderow |
| 1964 | 1964 | Patrol Craft | 1 | PC-461 |
| 1965 | 1966-1967 | Frigate | 5 | Buckley |
| 1966 | 1968 | Minesweeper | 1 | Adjutant |
| 1966 | 1966-1967 | Frigate | 3 | Buckley |
| 1967 | 1967 | OPV | 2 | Auk |
| 1968 | 1968-1969 | Patrol Craft | 9 | Cape |

TABLE 5.1: List of Vessels Provided by the U.S. to the ROKN 1949-1968. Compiled by the author using SIPRI Arms Transfer Database, Trade Registers generated by author.

What can be drawn from this period was that the ROK was incapable of developing its own military capacity, primarily due to the after effects of the war. It lacked an industrial base and the economic resources to even maintain let alone improve its operational capabilities. As a

result of this the country was forced to rely upon the assistance of the U.S., a reliance that allowed the U.S. to drive the developmental direction of the ROK military in order for them to a) ensure the security of the ROK and b) make sure that their own strategic interests were met.

In a narrower sense, the ROKN was not a priority for the U.S. It was in U.S. eyes a necessity but only within the very limited operational context of the peninsular maritime environment and the limited threat posed by the KPN. Operational influence as such was less than that of the U.S. over the ROKA but the ROKN was greatly affected by the wider strategic concerns of the U.S. in the region. U.S. uncertainty over the reliability and role of the ROK within this environment influenced the extent to which the ROKN could be developed. This point should not lessen the importance of the land threat posed by the DRPK, but should serve to highlight the extent to which the ROKN was marginalised within the ROK's security architecture, not only because of the imperative to focus on ROK ground forces but also because the U.S. set the developmental direction and strategic needs of the ROK military as a whole. A fact that the ROKN themselves recognise for their relative lack of development stating in 1999 that *'the reason for the deficiency in the navy's development...biased decision making favoured toward ground forces and the recognition that the navy's role was only to support the U.S. Navy'*.¹⁴ This period following the Korean War, created the bedrock for ROK military priorities and procurement needs, factors that would continue to be influenced both directly and indirectly by the U.S. and would have a significant resultant impact on the ROKN.

¹⁴ ROKN Headquarters (1999). Navy Vision 2020 <해군비전 2020>. Gyeryong-dae. ROKN Headquarters. 80

V.III YULGOK: THE CHANGE IN RELATIONSHIP

The end of the 1960's heralded an adjustment in the U.S.-ROK relationship as heightened levels of DPRK provocations combined with a slow increase in the ROK's economic capacity combined with shifting U.S. strategic priorities as the burden of Vietnam and the weight of the Cold War were felt in Washington. The ROK view of the alliance transformed from total reliance into an unusual mixture of fear of U.S. withdrawal and a growing confidence in following its own path in its defence policy and procurement priorities.

By the end of the 1960's the DPRK had considerably strengthened its own military capabilities. Backed by the Soviet Union, it had added to its ground, air and naval forces and between 1966 and 1969 in a demonstration of military confidence launched a series of conventional attacks along the DMZ alongside infiltrations in to ROK territory resulting in significant casualties on both sides. At the same time the DPRK conducted 4 spectacular, high profile operations against U.S. and ROK forces and institutions. In January 1968 a 31 man DPRK SOF team infiltrated ROK territory and attempted to attack the ROK presidential residence (known as the Blue House) and assassinate the then president Park, Chung-hee. Although the assault resulted in failure, the team having being detected 100 metres away from its target, it had a significant psychological impact on the ROK and resulted in divisions over the appropriate response between the U.S. and the ROK. A few days later, on the 23rd of January, the *USS Pueblo* a U.S. intelligence gathering ship was captured by KPN vessels in the Sea of Japan. The crew was eventually released after 11 months of bilateral U.S.-DPRK negotiations however the ship remains in the DPRK to this day. In October/November 1968 a

120 strong DPRK SOF team infiltrated the west coast of the ROK resulting in a massive man hunt involving 40,000 ROKA and police which lasted several months and resulted in 173 deaths from both sides. Finally in April 1969 a U.S. EC-121 reconnaissance aircraft was shot down by DPRK jets the loss of all aboard. These provocations raised the fear of war within the ROK and the option of retaliatory action was strongly encouraged by the ROK command although this was rejected by the U.S. who felt escalation would not resolve the situation and would be potentially disastrous.

While reaching a degree of agreement on the appropriate response to these attacks, President Park did not believe that diplomatic and show of force operations would be successful. What followed was a growing perception of a lack of U.S. commitment to the security of the ROK, something that was heightened by the implementation of the Nixon doctrine, which was declared in 1969 and called for Asian countries to commit more resources to their own defence. In the ROK this resulted in the withdrawal of the 7th Infantry Division dropping U.S. force levels on the peninsula from 62,000 to 42,000 in 1971. This was a major psychological and military shock to the ROK who had troops committed to support U.S. operations in Vietnam and had worked hard to ensure that the U.S. commitment would remain steadfast in their support of the ROK. The cumulative effect of these events was the realisation in the ROK that they would have to increase their own efforts towards defence as the U.S. presence on the peninsula was potentially unstable and unsustainable.

In order to counter the ROK's unhappiness over the U.S. reluctance to react more robustly to DPRK actions and the drawdown of troop numbers, Washington did provide a number of

force improvement packages aimed at aiding the ROK against this increased DPRK military activity. They were initially guaranteed in the 1966 Brown memorandum, which provided relatively unspecific guarantees of a U.S. commitment to further improving the ROK armed forces both to assist in the prevention of DPRK attacks and repay the ROK for contributing troops to the Vietnam conflict. Measures included in a package negotiated between 1965 and 1968 included the provision of helicopters, the costs of 8 new infantry battalions, equipment for a counter infiltration battalion, new F4 fighter jets, a counter-infiltration package worth 32.3 million dollars and the provision of 2 destroyers.¹⁵ After this package, following the announcement of the Nixon doctrine, a larger 5 year force improvement programme was announced, worth over 1.596 billion dollars. This was designed to compensate for the loss of the 7th Infantry Division and to reassure the ROK that the U.S. remained committed to their defence. As such being primarily focused on developing the ROK's ground forces, it reflected both U.S. views of ROK security needs and the strategic realities on the peninsula. Ultimately this package was significantly hampered by congressional limitations on funding resulting in what was to be a 200 million dollar a year program over 5 years being stretched over a much longer period and was eventually reduced.^{16 17}

¹⁵ Memorandum from Under Secretary of State (Katzenbach) to President Johnson, 5 February 1968, (2000) Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68, V. XXIX, Part 1 Korea. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. 327

¹⁶ Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger to Secretary of State Rogers and Secretary of Defense Schlesinger, 18 July 1973, (2011) Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76, V. E-12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973-1976, Document 241 Retrieved from U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian website www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frUS.1969-76ve12/d241 (01/08/2012)

¹⁷ Memorandum from the President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, 25 July 1973, Foreign Relations of the United States, 1969-76, V. E-12, Documents on East and Southeast Asia, 1973-1976, Document 242. Retrieved from U.S. Department of State Office of the Historian website www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frUS.1969-76ve12/d242

The naval aspect of these modernisation programs is quite revealing in that President Park requested more destroyers in 1967 as *'the destroyers presently in service in the Korean navy had been in use since 1946 and were the oldest type still in operation. Their speed was only in the 18–24 knot range, and they were simply not competitive as compared with North Korean naval equipment'*.¹⁸ Eventually, the U.S. provided 1 destroyer from the active fleet and 1 from the naval reserve.¹⁹ This request indicates recognition on the ROK side of the alliance of the need to build up naval forces to match those of the DPRK and a realisation on the part of the U.S. that the ROKN needed capabilities commensurate with those of the DPRK.

This became more apparent in the provisions of the 1971 force improvement program. The report the force improvement program was based on, NSSM 27, did not recommend any increase in funds for the ROKN given that *'existing ROK naval forces were at least minimally adequate to deal with the North Korean naval threat'*.²⁰ However this did change and just under 10 percent of the total funds given to the ROK military would be provided to the ROKN amounting to about \$112 million, the reasoning behind this *'was to replace obsolete ships and craft in the ROK Navy and to provide an increased capability to cope with North Korean seaborne infiltration'*.²¹ This inclusion of measures for the ROKN and the commitment of additional destroyers provide insight into the role of the U.S. in this period

¹⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, March 14 1967,(2000). Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68, V. XXIX, Part 1 Korea. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. 237

¹⁹ Memorandum from Under Secretary of State (Katzenbach) to President Johnson, 5 February 1968, (2000) Foreign Relations of the United States, 1964-68, V. XXIX, Part 1 Korea. Washington DC: U.S. Government Printing Office. 327

²⁰ Department of State (1970). U.S.C Under Secretaries Committee, Subject: Modernization of the Republic of Korea Armed Forces. 3

²¹ Ibid.

and the reliance the ROKN and the ROK had on their benevolence. The ROKN was clearly viewed as a force to match the capabilities of the DPRK and the U.S. did not require or desire for them to increase in strength or capabilities even to the level requested by the army dominated ROK government. Indeed this entire period represented the beginning of a shift in the alliance, the U.S. reaction to DPRK provocations combined with a sense in Seoul of a wavering U.S. commitment to their security encouraged President Park to initiate a long term industrial and military project that would provide the ROK with a self-reliant defence capability.

1) THE YULGOK PROGRAM

Named the *Yulgok* program, after a 16th century Korean scholar who advocated improving the kingdom's defence capabilities, the self reliance defence initiative sought to develop the ROK's military while at the same time building an indigenous defence industry. These developments were to be funded largely by the ROK's coffers but would still rely heavily on assistance from the U.S. in terms of purchasing advanced weapons systems and manufacturing know how. While increasing the ROK's own military capability and providing insurance against the possibility of U.S. withdrawal, the *Yulgok* program did not include altering the command structure on the peninsula or result in a change in the doctrine of deterrence as the U.S. ultimately maintained its presence and the ground threat from the DPRK did not significantly diminish.

The *Yulgok* program was extended beyond Park's tenure and was undertaken in three five year phases; the first from 1974-'81, the second from '82-'86 and the third from '87-'92.

Each of the five year elements was designed to improve a certain aspect of the ROK's defensive capabilities. The first phase was focused on the development of a basic military industrial capability, in combination with the replacement of old equipment, construction of new military infrastructure and significant improvements in the ROKN and ROKAF designed to match the improvements made across the DMZ. At the same time the ROKA was gearing towards increasing its mobility and developing its firepower through the purchase and later construction of artillery. The second phase was aimed at developing a degree of qualitative superiority over the DPRK. This too was a cross-service development plan which would improve all aspects of the ROK armed forces. Importantly, there was also a focus on the development of an indigenous R&D capacity in order to reduce the country's reliance on foreign powers, mainly the U.S., and to develop a degree of independence in the weapons industry. The final phase of the *Yulgok* program was dedicated to building upon the advances made since 1974. It was designed to encompass high-tech weaponry and improve the ROK's indigenous defence capabilities through the mass production of ground vehicles and weaponry and through licensed production of aircraft and naval vessels.²²

The success or failure of this project as a move toward reducing the ROK's reliance on the U.S. is difficult to judge and is outside the purview of this thesis. But interesting points can be drawn from it. The goal of reducing the ROK's need of U.S. equipment was lessened by a) the need to develop interoperable equipment and b) the need to maintain the alliance through purchasing U.S. weapons systems. This is demonstrated by the fact that in the 1980s

²² MND (2003). *Self Reliant National Defense Capability and our Security* <자주국방과 우리의 안보>. MND: Seoul. 21-23

and into the 1990s the ROK imported about 85% of its weaponry from the U.S.²³ At the same time the country's indigenous production capacity was based on mainly U.S. designs, through either illegally copying U.S. equipment, licensed production or via the Technical Data Package program which provided the ROK with the technological capability to develop its own weapon systems. An examination of the major weapons systems that were introduced in this period indicates even further the reliance on U.S. designs. A good example of this was the development of a so called indigenous MBT which began in 1975. As described by Suh, the procurement competition was between a derivation of the German Leopard I and the U.S. built M1. Under pressure from the U.S., the M1 was selected and given the designation of K1. While claimed to be of Korean design the reality is that the K1 was built using U.S. technology a fact confirmed by the payment of royalties to the U.S. for each tank constructed in the ROK.²⁴ Further examples of the influence of the U.S. can be found in the procurement of ROKAF equipment, where the F5 and later the KF-16 fighter jets were built under licence by the ROK. In part such licensing agreements allowed the ROK to develop indigenous technical knowhow but there is no doubt that the U.S. retained extraordinary influence over significant procurement projects and that the ROK remained reliant on outside sources for the provision of advanced weaponry.

2) BUDGET AND FINANCE

The *Yulgok* program also saw the progressive alteration of the U.S.-ROK alliance in relation to the U.S. provision of military financial support. Between 1950 and 1970, the ROK was almost entirely reliant on the U.S. for funding, through MAP and IMET, the ROK was provided with

²³ Suh, J-J (2007). *Power, Interest and Alliances*. Palgrave Macmillan: New York. 70

²⁴ Ibid. 83

just under 4 billion Dollars of military grant aid.²⁵ This accounted for the majority of the ROK's defence budget and was a significant factor in the U.S. control over the ROK and what it purchased. However at the end of the 1960's the ROK was shifted away from this type of assistance and moved on to the FMS (Foreign Military Sales) system under which credit would be in part provided to assist the ROK in its own force development, while the rest of procurement would be paid for directly by the ROK under the FMS scheme.²⁶ This alteration of funding shifted the burden of defence spending onto the ROK and as Kim points out, the ROK responded to the reduction in direct financing by increasing significantly its own proportion of defence spending.²⁷ This was an indicator of the country's rapidly developing economy, in that it was able to match the reduction in U.S. funding through its own finances. The result of this was that by 1986 the ROK had stopped receiving military grants and had fully transferred to FMS and direct commercial sales for its procurement needs.²⁸ This was significant in that financial independence matched the self-reliant defence goals of the ROK, but it also reduced the level of U.S. Influence over the ROK's procurement decisions.

Within this context the *Yulgok* program financing was split between the 3 services. The ROKN, was the junior partner in the division of funds. In the first program, the navy received 15.8% of the available cash.²⁹ This did increase and in the second and third phases, its share went up to 20.2% and then 21% respectively.³⁰ This was a hindrance for the ROKN, and

²⁵ Kim, J-I. (1996). *The Future of the U.S.-Republic of Korea Relationship*. London: Macmillan Press. 35

²⁶ Ibid. 39

²⁷ Between 1971 and 1977 the ROK went from paying for only 42.5% of its defence burden to 87.4%. See: Kim, J-I. (1996). 40

²⁸ Defense Security Cooperation Agency (2010). Fiscal Year Series. Washington D.C.: Department of Defense. 77-79

²⁹ Cdr. Cho, Y-J. (2003). 126

³⁰ Ibid. 168

signified that despite relatively substantial force improvement, it was very much the junior partner between the three services. This should not be taken that the ROK ignored its maritime security, evidence of this is the repeated initiatives of the President Park to acquire new and more powerful vessels to combat the DPRK, but merely at this stage the ROK was facing an overwhelming land threat and it was this that needed to be dealt with and given budgetary competition the ROKN was always going to lose out to its larger service rivals.

3) THE ROKN & THE YULGOK PROGRAM

Naval development during the *Yulgok* program was marked by the ROK move toward indigenous construction of naval vessels. While initially reliant on the U.S. for technical assistance, licensed production and funding, this dependence began to shift as U.S. support for wide ranging development lessened and the ROK's own purchasing power increased. While this pattern was replicated in all of the services, it was more pronounced in naval development, something that was indicative of the U.S. reluctance to assist in large scale naval modernisation. Between 1974 and 1992, the ROKN's capabilities saw substantial improvement, it went from a force of approximately 20,000 men to one that was over 45,000 strong (not including the ROKMC). Its platform numbers also increased, going from 63 surface platforms (including patrol craft) and 80 assorted landing craft to a force with 40 destroyers and frigates, 122 patrol and coastal vessels, 51 landing and amphibious craft and submarines, modern frigates and logistics support ships on order.³¹ However, it is essential to recognise that the ROKN's operational focus remained on the DPRK and regional ambitions, while in the minds of naval planners were nowhere near fruition.

³¹ Information from: International Institute of Strategic Studies. The Military Balance 1975-1976 & 1992-1993.

Assessing U.S. involvement in ROKN naval planning, is a complex exercise. Throughout the *Yulgok* program the U.S. supplied ships and equipment that the ROK requested, but only to the extent that they were seen as necessary to the overall defence of the ROK within the context of the peninsula and were in-line with U.S. strategic requirements. The largest assistance came in the form of upgraded WWII destroyers of the *Gearing* and *Sumner* classes. These purchases, which were made in 1977, '79 and '81 totalled 5 ships and were aimed at the replacing older warships in order to counter the DPRK's submarine threat and superior missile armed surface platforms.³² At this stage, these purchases indicated the lack of funding available for large surface ships and the limited technical ability of ROK naval designers who were at this time learning their craft in the U.S. More importantly, for the long term development of the navy was U.S. assistance in developing indigenously built patrol vessels, platforms which both matched ROKN needs and U.S. strategic interests.

Between 1972 and 1979, the ROKN began development of two patrol boats, an 80 ton PK and a 150 ton PKM. These boats, both of which were indigenously manufactured and designed (approximately 20 PK and 85 PKM were manufactured), were closely based on U.S. boats which had been loaned to the ROKN in 1972 and later in 1975. The craft loaned in 1975 was the Coastal Patrol Interdiction Craft (CPIC) which was designed specifically for coastal operations and was marketed to the ROK and Taiwan. However, despite this fact, the ROK chose to build their own version. The reasoning behind this indigenous development was primarily economic, with ROKN estimates suggesting that indigenous construction would be 50% cheaper than purchasing craft from the U.S., an important point considering

³² SIPRI Arms Transfer Database. Generated from: www.sipri.org/contents/armstrad/as_data.html

the limitations in the ROK's defence budget and the relatively minor status the ROKN had in the overall allocation.³³ Similarly, in 1975 ROK and U.S. industries began a more formal interaction in the production of vessels. The *Paeku* Class a 250 ton PG was jointly constructed in the U.S. and the ROK. A replica of the *Asheville* Gunboat that was operated by the U.S., 3 were built by a U.S. manufacturer and 5 were then built under licence by Korea Tacoma, a ROK owned subsidiary of Tacoma industries. This sort of production deal matched the developments within the ROK defence industry in arms manufacturing capability and was significant in that it was a precursor for the further types of projects in both weapons systems and platforms.

A development of the *Paeku* class production was the acquisition of anti-ship missile capability. This was something that the ROK had identified as a significant weakness in comparison with the KPN which were at the time operating *Styx* ASM on their patrol craft. While the ROK requested that the *Paeku* be armed with U.S. made Harpoon missiles, there was seeming reluctance from the U.S. to do so. It has been suggested that the U.S. was unwilling to transfer such technology due to fears of misuse or patent infringement by ROK companies, however a 1975 memo of a conversation between then Sec. of State Kissinger and the Assistant Sec. of State for East Asian Affairs Philip Habib suggests that the reasoning behind the U.S. intransigence was a more complex one of capacity, in that the production of such a missile for export was not seemingly possible at the time due to assembly line limitations (something that the U.S. were unwilling to acknowledge publically) and a U.S. desire to control to some extent what the ROK purchased in terms of '*priority requirements*

³³ ROKN Headquarters. *Republic of Korea Navy* <대한민국 해군>.E-book 211

that have been set jointly between ourselves [the U.S.] and the Koreans as to what arms they need'.³⁴ ³⁵

This was complicated by ROK interest in purchasing such a missile and other weapon systems from other nations, something which would have been politically damaging in Washington, especially in consideration that U.S. grant aid might be used to purchase foreign weapons systems, as one official stated, *'if I were a congressman and I discovered that I appropriated 145 million dollars to a country which spent another hundred million dollars for weaponry from another country, I don't think I'd appropriate 145 million dollars.'*³⁶

What this suggests is concern at some levels within the U.S. at the direction the ROK was taking, but also the limitations of the administration's power, in the face of a hostile congress and tightening foreign aid budgets following the end of the Vietnam War. By 1978 the U.S. had decided to sell the ROK the *Harpoon* system, this followed the purchase of French made *Exocet* missiles and *Standard ARM* from the U.S.³⁷ The reality was at this stage, that the ROK seemed to prefer using U.S. systems, but if these were not available they were willing to look elsewhere. Although the purchase of *Exocet* was quite small, in total 24 missiles were bought in two tranches, it was indicative of a future where the ROK was willing to look away from its traditional source for weapons systems.

This diversification, driven by necessity but also by commercial and political demands, became more apparent in the building of three new classes of surface ship. The *Donghae*

³⁴ As has been previously shown the U.S. did not place a high priority in ROKN development in this period.

³⁵ Minutes of the Secretary of State's Staff Meeting, Washington, 6. Jan 1975. Retrieved from www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frUS.1969-76ve/d261. 33-35

³⁶ Ibid. 35

³⁷ SIPRI Arms Transfers Database. Generated from: www.sipri.org/contents/armstrad/as_data.html

and *Pohang* Class corvettes and the *Ulsan* class frigates. All three of these ships were indigenously designed and constructed and used mostly non-U.S. weapon and command and control systems. The first of these classes, the *Ulsan* class frigate, was first proposed in 1975, when President Park looked at the need to mass produce heavier vessels to counter the KPN.³⁸ It was decided again to move toward domestic construction as foreign purchases were deemed to be too costly as a result the ROK designed the 35 knot 2,180 ton frigate.

The U.S. showed little interest in assisting in the development of the vessels, the first of which was commissioned in 1981, and as a result, major components of the vessel came from Italy (guns) the Netherlands (sensors), Germany (power plant) and only *Harpoon* was fitted from the U.S. Although billed as an indigenous frigate, the reality was that the majority of the ships systems were bought from abroad. This shows at this stage of the ROK's development, that they were a) capable in building ships but lacked the technological skill in developing more complex items, b) the ROK was capable of funding its own large shipbuilding program and c) the reliance on the U.S. in the naval sphere was to some extent diminishing in that the ROKN was willing to go it alone in platform development and financing. The same indications come from the *Donghae* class and *Pohang* class corvettes, which were launched in 1983 and 1984 respectively. These ships, carried similarly diverse load outs to the *Ulsan* class, in that they carried weapons, sensor and propulsion systems from a number of countries including the U.S.

This impressive force improvement program, while being undertaken to counter KPN force

³⁸ Cdr. Cho, Y-J. (2003). The Naval Policy of the Republic of Korea: From the Beginnings to the Twenty-First Century. Unpublished Doctoral Thesis: University of Hull. 138

improvements provided the foundation for the ROKN's current modernisation phase by developing the technical and engineering knowledge for ROK ship and weapons manufacturers that would be used in future designs. The role of the U.S. in this modernisation was initially substantial but their support was limited by their perceptions of the greater importance of wider ROK military force development and the belief that ROKN modernisation and the ROK's maritime security needs were defined by the strength of the KPN. The ROKN was forced to look elsewhere for its procurement needs. By the end of 1992, the ROKN would have in place design teams which produced the initial concepts for its modern surface platforms in use today, demonstrating its ambition and capabilities. As such this was a huge turn around in a relatively short space of time, developing indigenously constructed ships with a degree of technological advancement and successfully operating them indicates the increasing sophistication of the ROKN and their shipbuilders, something the U.S. took an initial role in but were ultimately not responsible for.

The best example of this during the *Yulgok* program was the ROK's pursuit of submarine capability. First broached in 1975 by President Park his reasoning for such procurement was described in a U.S. State Department Memo.

'In order to deal with the North Korean submarine threat effectively both during a period of conflict and to present infiltration and subversive efforts he wished to acquire a comparable capability. He felt that if the ROK had a similar capability, North Korea would not utilize its submarines'.³⁹

The U.S. was resistant to this idea, stating to the President that submarines were not the

³⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, 27 August 1975. Retrieved from www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frUS.1969-74ve12/d270d

best method of countering such a threat and refused to assist in their purchase.⁴⁰ At this stage the ROK being reliant on the U.S. was left with limited options and the U.S. were extremely reluctant to allow the ROK to pursue a submarine capability. It is now clear that the ROK was considering purchasing UK WWII era submarines, which would have been of limited value, but U.S. pressure was enough to prevent their purchase.⁴¹ While hamstrung by their lack of economic capability, the ROK continued to pursue undersea platforms, attempting to negotiate with several European countries in the early 1980s despite considerable U.S. opposition.⁴² It wasn't until 1987, after a failed competition in 1984-1986 that an agreement was reached with HDW of Germany to supply 9 type 209 submarines, 3 of which would be built in Germany and the remaining 6 to be constructed in kit form in the ROK. This type of contract provided the ROK with the technical expertise to pursue a fully indigenous submarine construction capability.

The issue of ROKN submarines is interesting at it demonstrates how in the 1970s the U.S. was reluctant to assist the ROK in purchasing such capabilities, believing them to be extraneous to peninsular security requirements. At that point the ROK had no choice but to accept such a decision however as the ROK's economy grew so did their ability to pursue their own independent procurement objectives. Despite U.S. opposition, and while Washington still wielded incredible control over the ROK's armed forces and security policy, the ROKN was pursuing to some extent a different path, one which did not always meet with

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Minutes of the Secretary of State's Staff Meeting, Washington, 6. Jan 1975. Retrieved from www.history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frUS.1969-76ve/d261. 33-35

⁴² Chung, E-S. (2007). Ultramodern Conventional Submarine KSX As a Leverage for the Future Defense of the Korean Peninsula. Seoul: Korea Institute of Maritime Studies. 141-142. & Interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae

U.S. approval but would underpin future ROKN force development

| DIRECT FROM U.S. | INDIGENOUS/U.S. DESIGN | INDIGENOUS/NON-U.S. SUPPLIERS |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| (1972) 2X GEARING FRAM-2 | (1975-1976) 8X BAEKU PKM | (1975-1993) 9X ULSAN FF |
| (1973) 2X SUMNER FRAM-2 | (1977) 6X MULKAE LCU | (1982-1983) 4X DONGHAE PCC |
| (1975) 2X ADJUTANT | (1979) 29X PK (80 TON) | (1984-1993) 24X POHANG PCC |
| (1977) 2X GEARING FRAM-1 | (1979) 75+X CHAMSURI PKM | (1986-1994) 6X KANGKEONG MSC |
| (1979) 1X GEARING FRAM-1 | (1991-1996) 4X LST-1 | (1992-1998) 4X CHEONGHAE AOE |
| (1981) 2X GEARING FRAM-1 | | (1993-2001) 9X CHANG BOGO SSK |

TABLE 5.2: Origin of Ships by Nationality during the Yulgok Program

| U.S. | FRANCE | GERMANY | UK | ITALY | NETHERLANDS |
|------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| (1974) RGM-66D ARM | (1975) MM-38 ASM | (1979) MTU-538 DIESEL ENGINE | (1983) ST-1802 FIRE CONTROL RADAR | (1978) COMPACT 40L70 NAVAL GUN | (1979) DA-05 AIR SEARCH RADAR |
| (1978) RGM-84 ASM | (1976) PA-6 DIESEL ENGINE | (1987) SUT AS/ASW TORPEDO | (1985) S-1810 AIR/SEA SEARCH RADAR | (1978) COMPACT 76 MM NAVAL GUN | (1979) WM-20 FIRE CONTROL RADAR |
| (1975) MK-46 TORPEDO | (1982) MM-38 ASM | | | | (1980) PHS-32 ASW SONAR |
| (1980) RGM-84 ASM | (1988) PA-6 DIESEL ENGINE | | (1988) SEA SKUA ASM | | (1980) ZW-06 SEA SEARCH RADAR |
| (1988) AN/AQS-18 SONAR | | | | | (1991) GOALKEEPER CIWS |
| (1988) RGM-84 ASM | | | | | |
| (1992) RGM-84 ASM | | | | | |

TABLE 5.3: Origin of Weapon Systems during the Yulgok Program. Taken from SIPRI Arms Transfer Database

V.IV: POST YULGOK AND A CHANGE IN RELATIONSHIP

The ROK-U.S. relationship in the post *Yulgok* era has seen gradual but important changes in both how the alliance was managed and what its future goals were. The influence of the U.S. over the ROK remained strong however as both countries made the transition out of the Cold War and the resultant geo-strategic circumstances meant that the alliance underwent a number of transformations. These alterations surrounded the future and purpose of the alliance, alongside the transfer of significant responsibilities to the ROK and alterations in the U.S. presence in the country. Throughout this period however, the relationship between the U.S. and ROK's militaries became if anything more interconnected as they strove to develop systems which would allow greater interoperability in the age of RMA and allow the ROK to take a lead in the defence of their own country.

1) OPCON TRANSFER

As a starting point, an analysis of the issue of command and control of forces on the peninsula provides clarity about the extent to which the ROK has begun to take greater responsibility for its own defence. At the start of the Korean War the ROK transferred operational command of its military to the United Nations Command (UNC). Headed by an American general, this arrangement lasted until the 1970's when as a reaction to the force reductions underway the Combined Forces Command (CFC) was set up. This too was to be headed by the commander of the U.S. forces in Korea (CINC USFK) who was also commander of the UNC (CINC UNC). A complex command relationship and decision making model was created, the CINC CFC, would report to the National Command Authorities of both countries,

but also while holding peacetime operational command of the ROK Forces the CINC CFC would not have it over U.S. forces who were under CINC Pacific Command (PACOM). Under the CINC CFC are the three component commands; Land, Air and Sea all of which were initially under the command of U.S. officers. The complexity of this arrangement hindered integration between the two sets of forces and did not lend itself to adequate training and utilisation of ROK forces.⁴³

Partially as a result of these inadequacies and the emotional impact of having ROK forces under U.S. control, preparation for the transition of OPCON took place in the late 1980's when President Roh, Tae-woo looked to regain control following fears of the reduction in U.S. forces after the EASI and the Nunn Warner Amendment.⁴⁴ What followed was a gradual Koreanisation of certain elements of ROK defence and security issues. A major development in this effort was the restructuring of the ROK command system, in this light the ROK JCS's role was moved from being essentially administrative to having overall control of each of the armed services. In this light, 1991 saw two significant events take place the first was the appointment of a high ranking ROK officer to a senior position on the UN MAC and the second was the ROK becoming responsible for security and defence along the DMZ, with the exception of the JSA.⁴⁵ In line with these changes in 1992 a ROK 4 Star General took command of the ground component of the CFC. Later in 1994, peacetime OPCON was transferred to the ROK JCS. This was a huge alteration in the alliance as it gave the ROK operational independence and command and control during peacetime on missions such a

⁴³ Kim, J-K. 1996. 57

⁴⁴ MND (2006). 2006 *Defense White Paper*. Seoul: MND. 102

⁴⁵ The UN MAC is the United Nations Armistice Commission which supervises the Korean Armistice Commission. The JSA is the Joint Security Area, an area on the DMZ which is used for negotiations and transfers between the ROK and the DPRK.

patrolling the DMZ and NLL. What followed from this was the beginning of a push for wartime operational command which in 1994 was agreed to be discussed and reviewed in 1996, but was deemed unlikely at that time due to the lack of ROK capacity in surveillance, intelligence and command and control areas.⁴⁶

Following the peacetime OPCON transfer and the commitment of the U.S. to drawdown its forces after 2003, the ROK took control of 10 missions that were previously U.S. responsibilities. These included, security of the JSA, rear area decontamination, control of the air to surface firing range, mine laying (land), operation of the counter fire HQ, control of the supply routes (land), countering special operations personnel at sea, control of close air support, weather forecasting and SAR.⁴⁷ With peacetime OPCON, the ROK military gained the greatest level of operational independence it had ever had, but with the transfer of missions the development of the ROK armed forces and their ability to take over certain functions from the U.S. became clearer. Further it signposted a future where the ROK would eventually be able to replace the majority of U.S. forces on the peninsula.

After these successful operational and command transfers occurred a series of consultations in to the future of OPCON began. In 2005 an agreement was made at the SCM to transfer OPCON between 2009 and 2012.⁴⁸ This transfer which formed part of President Roh, Moo-hyun's drive to regain ROK sovereignty over its own defence was a huge leap for the ROK and met with the underlying political desire in the U.S. to gradually handover OPCON. With this

⁴⁶ MND (2006). 102

⁴⁷ Ibid. 100

⁴⁸ SCM is the Security Consultative Meeting between the Defence Minister of both countries. Annually held, it has evolved into the main directing organ for security consultations between officials.

in mind new command systems were set up and while the basic package of ROK defence would remain the same; based on defensive deterrence it would entail much greater operational responsibilities for the ROK ultimately placing their defence in their own hands, at the same time any gaps in ROK capability would be bridged by the U.S..⁴⁹ While this step change had broad support in the U.S., in the ROK there was great concern over the readiness of the ROK military to take on such responsibilities, this concern was bolstered by the fear, despite assurance from the U.S. that it would lead to an eventual pull out of USFK. This attitude speaks to a remaining psychological dependence on the U.S. within certain sections of ROK political circles and their military, something that has been a consistent factor every time the U.S. has drawn down troops from the peninsula and will need to be overcome if the ROK is become fully independent at some time in its future.

OPCON transfer must be seen through this lens of dependence, something that was clearly indicated in 2010 when, following the sinking of the *Cheonan*, it was delayed to 2015. The actions of the DPRK and the resultant tensions on the peninsula were provided as reasons for such a delay although it is clear that the ROK was not fully ready, despite the commitment of U.S. bridging capabilities, to undertake full OPCON as the preparations that are currently being made to prepare for handover such as the creation of new facilities and the training of ROK forces for theatre level command suggest.⁵⁰ OPCON transfer is significant in that it is indicative of the increase in ROK responsibilities and the gradual alteration in the alliance itself. This alteration is heading toward a more equal partnership but as the issues following the sinking of the *Cheonan* show there remains a level of

⁴⁹ MND (2006). 103

⁵⁰ MND (2010). 2010 *Defense White Paper*. Seoul: MND. 82-83.

psychological and structural dependence which is exposed each time the security situation on the peninsula worsens.

2) THE STATUS OF U.S. FORCES

While the OPCON transfer procedure has been underway, the status of the USFK has also altered significantly. At the start of the 1990's the Bush administration undertook a review of their forces in East Asia following the 1989 Nunn-Warner Amendment to that years defence appropriations bill which called for mandatory reductions in the U.S. military presence in the ROK. The resultant report named the East Asia Security Initiative mandated a 3 phase withdrawal of U.S. troops over ten years, with the resultant force numbers dropping from 44,000 to 28,000.

The first tranche of reductions occurred between 1990 and 1992 and resulted in approximately 5,000 army and 2,000 air force personnel leaving the ROK, bringing overall force levels down to approximately 37,000. This was predicated on the ROK taking a greater role in its own defence and reducing the financial and manpower burden on the U.S.⁵¹ The report determined that the force improvement programs that had been put in place under the *Yulgok* program allowed for this reduction as both the ROK military and its defence industry had advanced in capabilities.⁵² The second and third phases were put on indefinite hold following revelations about the DPRK's nuclear programme, an issue that would frame much of alliance relations in the coming years. As a result the USFK consisted of the 2nd Infantry division with one mechanised brigade and one aviation brigade and the 7th Air Force

⁵¹ Department of Defence (1990). *A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Report to Congress*. Washington D.C.: Department of Defense. 10

⁵² Ibid.

with the strength of 1 Tactical Fighter Wing.⁵³

The status of the USFK remained relatively static during the Clinton era as the ongoing DPRK nuclear crisis prevented any significant troop reductions. The East Asian Strategy Reports released in 1995 and 1998 committed the U.S. to maintaining 100,000 troops in the region and while lacking specifics about ROK force levels seemed to confirm the maintenance of the extant force structure and commitment. These reports were designed to reassure the U.S. allies in the region of continued support following the negative reaction and internal insecurity fears that resulted from the EASI reports of the previous administration. While the plans for a large reduction were not met with enthusiasm in the ROK, the greatest determinant in altering the proposals was not ROK action but the nuclear crisis which dominated the security discourse. As such what is worth noting is that U.S. plans were in many ways hostage to situation on the peninsula and the fear of a nuclear armed DPRK.

The relatively stability of U.S. force levels on the peninsula was upset following the September 11th attacks on the U.S. which changed the U.S. strategic outlook as it positioned itself for the War on Terror. What resulted was a large scale review of the USFK and its capabilities. The Bush administration and specifically the Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld undertook a Global Posture Review which aimed to address some of the perceived deficiencies within foreign U.S. force commitments. It was aimed at making the U.S. forces more strategically flexible and was designed to do more with less utilising the advance in U.S. military technology. This review had a large impact on the USFK, which in line with these

⁵³ Department of Defense (1992). *A Strategic Framework for the Asian Pacific Rim: Report to Congress*. Washington D.C.: Department of Defense. 20

policies would reduce its forces stationed on the peninsula. The plan was to drawdown the number of forces from 37,500 to 25,000 over a period of 8 years. The first reduction went ahead and took place between 2003 and 2004 bringing levels down by 5,000. This number was reduced further when another 4,000 troops were withdrawn, however the final tranche of reductions due in 2008 did not take place as the DPRK nuclear issue once again resurfaced and raised tensions to a point that it was not feasible to reveal any possibility of a weakened alliance in the face of increased DPRK activity.⁵⁴

These force levels remained in place as of 2012 but the reduced number was bolstered by an 11 billion dollar effort to modernise USFK equipment and bring it in-line with the rest of the U.S. military. The main areas that were prioritised were increased C4ISR capability, counter-fire capabilities, theatre missile defence, the prepositioning of stocks, force protection and logistics. Possibly the most significant of these is C4ISR development which was focused on replacing aging equipment and *'Improving interoperability of Republic of Korea and United States Forces-Korea communications systems'*.⁵⁵ This would as will be shown later have a significant impact on the force modernisation of the ROK military and the direction it would take in its own development and procurement decisions as it strove to match the U.S. modernisation package on the peninsula. The result of these force adjustments is that there are currently 28,500 U.S. troops stationed in the ROK. The majority of this force, just under 20,000, are part of the Eighth U.S. Army, under which is a Heavy Brigade Combat Team, a Fire support Brigade and a Combat Aviation Brigade. Its equipment includes M1A1 tanks,

⁵⁴ MND (2010). 77

⁵⁵ Senate Armed Services Committee (2003). *Statement of General Leon J. LaPorte Commander United Nations Command, Commander, Republic of Korea-United States Combined Forces Command and United States Forces Korea Before the 108th Congress Senate Armed Services Committee*. U.S. Senate: Washington D.C. 16

Bradley Armoured vehicles, artillery, surface to air missiles and AH-64 attack helicopters. Additionally, there are just under 9,000 U.S.AF troops stationed in the ROK attached to the 7th Air Force; comprising two Fighter Wings they operate F-16 and A-10 aircraft.

The draw downs of U.S. troops from the peninsula at this time did not in this author's opinion affect the alliance in any substantial fashion rather they are an indicator of the increased capabilities of the ROK armed forces and the increasing levels of lethality of U.S. weapon systems. What can be drawn from this is the impact of DPRK action and other outside events on USFK strength. Twice, the nuclear crisis has impacted on the level of troop reductions while at the same time other events such as September 11th have altered U.S. priorities and influenced how U.S. forces are deployed. The ultimate impact of these developments has as will be as shown been the modernisation of ROK forces to compensate for the loss of USFK troop numbers and the retention/strengthening of the U.S.-ROK procurement relationship.

3) THE FUTURE OF THE ALLIANCE: SHIFTING PRIORITIES AND A MOVE AWAY FROM THE PENINSULA

As has been shown the alliance has undergone substantial changes since 1992, however the purpose and function the alliance seemed, within the context of the post-cold war environment and the alterations in OPCON that had begun in 1994, to have atrophied with no future agenda other than maintaining deterrence on the peninsula. This was not strictly true however as a series of joint studies and consultations took place between 1995 and 2002 to discuss the progression of the alliance. These advances were replaced by the more

formal FOTA (Future of the Alliance) policy initiative which undertook to examine all aspects of the U.S.-ROK defence relationship.

This progression saw more concrete consultations in 2004 when Rumsfeld and ROK MINDEF Yoon undertook the JVS (Joint Vision Study), the aim of which was to place the alliance within the context of the future geo-strategic circumstances of both the ROK and the U.S., not only in the context of the peninsula but of the region and the globe.^{56 57} These initiatives saw the beginning of a ministerial level round of talks in 2006, named the 'Strategic Consultation for Allied Partnership', it committed to the deterrence principle but also focused on areas of joint interest on a global and regional level including; WMD proliferation, the spread and protection of democracy, coordination on PKO, MNF force operations, disaster relief and joint efforts to promote regional stability. The culmination of these efforts was the Joint Vision announcement in 2009 which has set the blue print for the future of the U.S.-ROK alliance. While maintaining the principles of the Mutual Defense Treaty, it commits both countries to closer militarily and economic ties and has set the tone for a more equal alliance, one based on shared interests and mutual future goals. More importantly it reaffirmed the ROK's assumption of the lead role in peninsular defence while committing the ROK to work with the U.S. on a regional and global basis on a whole range of issues from counter terrorism to regional security and enhanced coordination on post conflict reconstruction and PKO.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ MND (2006). 102

⁵⁷ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2004). *Joint Communiqué Thirty-Sixth Annual U.S.-ROK Security Consultative Meeting*.

⁵⁸ Office of the Press Secretary (2009). *Joint Vision for the Alliance of the United States of America and the Republic of Korea*. Washington D.C.: The White House.

The impact of these developments can be seen in increased U.S.-ROK cooperation on a number of levels. This is shown by the dispatch of ROK troops to Afghanistan in 2001, to Iraq in 2003 and Afghanistan again in 2010. These deployments were and are heavily influenced by the concept of alliance management. The Iraq deployment for example where the ROK was the third largest contributor of troops after the U.S. and UK, was directly linked to the alliance and the ability of the ROK to negotiate for alterations it desired within this structure. Furthermore the deployment to Afghanistan in 2010 of a PRT and accompanying military protection, while entirely defensive, was indicative of what the ROK and the U.S. had aimed for in the 2009 joint vision announcement, namely a ROK which could cooperate with and assist in U.S. operations abroad. The future of the alliance issues and the resulting ROK commitments have played an important role in allowing the ROK military to expand its horizons and operate internationally and is a signpost of a potential broader role for ROK forces in the future.

4) ROK FORCE MODERNISATION: THE U.S. AND BUDGETS

The summation of OPCON transfer, U.S. troop reductions and modernisation and the consequences of the future alliance initiatives have had a large impact on the methods and direction of ROK force development. While during the *Yulgok* program the ROK was attempting to reduce its reliance on the U.S. for its defence procurement needs. It is evident that in the period following, influenced by RMA and the results of the Gulf and Kosovo wars, that the ROK has begun to move back towards the U.S. in terms of procurement and force development.⁵⁹

⁵⁹ MND (2003). *Participatory Government Defense Policy 2003*. Seoul:MND

The early 1990s saw a degree of stagnation in ROK force procurement as President Kim Young-sam's focus was the de-politicisation of the military and anti-corruption efforts in procurement. Force modernisation took to some extent a secondary role in the administration's policies.⁶⁰ While development continued it was relatively directionless and was essentially a continuation of the *Yulgok* programs before it. While weapon systems continued to be added across the forces, modernisation plans did not address the fundamental weaknesses in the ROK military. Namely command and control capability, intelligence gathering, surveillance and advanced communications, these gaps had been and continued to be filled by USFK.

However in later years under Kim, Dae-jung and Roh, Moo-hyun, the ROK began to conceptually and concretely address some of these problems. The ROK looked at force modernisation in terms of the RMA, the advances and equipment that the U.S. forces had undergone and the inherent weaknesses that had become more evident as the drive for OPCON transfer gathered speed. The conceptualisation of ROK RMA began during the Kim, Dae-jung period when defence planners examined technological developments made in the West and looked to integrate them into future force development programs. While not an official policy as it was with the U.S., the overall direction of development was focused on C4ISR and sensor to shooter capabilities.⁶¹ Many of these concepts were reflected in the Defense Reform 2020 plan which was published in 2005 by the Roh government. This plan was designed with three basic goals 1) the development of a more balanced military to

⁶⁰ Moon, C-I & Lee, J-Y (2008). The Revolution in Military Affairs and the Defence IndU.S.try in South Korea. *Security Challenges*, 4 (4), 117-134. 121

⁶¹ Ibid.

reflect the growing need for an independent defence capability in line with the alterations in the alliance, 2) the introduction of RMA style weaponry with an emphasis on sensor to shooter capabilities and 3) to deal with a growing demographic problem by reducing the size of the armed forces from 681,000 to 500,000 over a period of 15 years, through a qualitative improvement in the armed forces.⁶² While this reform plan was altered by the Lee, Myung-bak administration the fundamental objective of technology based development remained the same (See Figure 5.1) in that force development was aimed at developing weapons and sensors which would allow the ROK to take advantage of the advances in interconnectivity and NWC.



FIGURE 5.1: Goals of Force Improvement Programs. From MND Defense White Paper 2008 & 2010

A major issue for the ROK in terms of the above defence reform objectives has since the early 1990's been one of funding. Frequent complaints about the ambition v. reality of the ROK's defence reform and modernisation funding have been raised by USFK senior staff, with the main problem being reduced levels of funding combined with the prioritisation of

⁶² MND (2005). *Defense Reform 2020*. Seoul:MND

certain projects over the previously outlined systematic development of C4I systems.⁶³

While the ROK's national defence budget has seen year on year increases, in terms of the defence budget versus GDP and the overall national budget there have been significant reductions since the early 1990s. As a result Mid-term Defense plan and Defense Reform budget targets over the short to long term have regularly fallen short resulting in the dropping, delay or reduction of big ticket item procurement or development. The primary reasons for this have been an increase in social welfare spending during this period and the impact of various financial crises primarily the 1998 IMF crisis on overall government finances. In examining the proposed budget for Defence Reform 2020, it is clear that it was overly optimistic and failed to reach its target in the first years of its initiation. Calling for an average increase in defence spending of 9.9 % year on year between 2006 and 2010, the reality was that the largest increase in this period was 8.8% in 2007 and 2008, falling to a 3.6% increase in the years between 2009 and 2010.⁶⁴ The same issue has affected the 2009-2013 Mid-term defence budget which was predicted on the same large increases in expenditure which have since failed to materialise.⁶⁵

The impact this has had on defence projects is difficult to analyse properly as the MND does not release large amounts of information about projected procurement v. realised procurement. What can be said is that in naval terms, it presents a large degree of difficulty

⁶³ Senate Armed Services Committee (2003). 6 & Senate Armed Services Committee (2005). *STATEMENT OF GENERAL THOMAS A. SCHWARTZ COMMANDER IN CHIEF UNITED NATIONS COMMAND/COMBINED FORCES COMMAND & COMMANDER, UNITED STATES FORCES KOREA BEFORE THE 107TH CONGRESS SENATE ARMED SERVICES COMMITTEE*. U.S. Senate: Washington D.C. 18.

⁶⁴ Figures calculated by comparing budget for Defense Reform 2020 in MND (2006). 44 and Annual ROK Defense Budgets from MND (2010). 407

⁶⁵ Figures calculated by comparing Mid-term Defense Plan 09-13 in MND (2008). 208 and Annual ROK Defense Budgets from MND (2010). 407

when attempting to plan over the long term as major projects can be delayed or even cancelled due to budgetary issues. This problem is highlighted further by the still junior status of the ROKN within the defence budget itself. The ROKN's share has remained relatively static since the *Yulgok* program, hovering between 15 and 20% of the total budget allocation. This rate was retained in this current period, with the average between 2000 and 2010 approximately 17% of the overall defence budget. This should be compared with 40-45% for the ROKA and approximately 20% for the ROKAF.⁶⁶ This makes life extremely difficult for the ROKN and is a hindrance on its overall development, especially considering the number of platforms that are being developed at the same time.⁶⁷ This is a key point, modernisation of the ROKN in this period is not occurring in isolation, but alongside the modernisation of all the services and with the low position of the ROKN its projects are particularly vulnerable. The KDX-III is a case in point with cost being so high for each vessel, the ROKN could not increase their number, the KDX-IIA which was a response to this problem, being smaller and cheaper has still not received concrete funding as priorities have shifted to towards developing platforms better suited to ASW demonstrating the difficulty the ROKN has in maintaining force development across the gambit of its mission goals and the prioritisation that is necessary in the face of strict budgetary requirements.

As Table 5.4 shows the size and nature of the force improvement programs was quite extensive with platform development across all of the armed services. A key element in the construction of these platforms is the factor of interoperability between the ROK and U.S.

⁶⁶ Figures obtained from ROK Assembly National Defense Committee Manuals <국회국방위원회편람>. 2004, 2006, 2008 and 2010.

⁶⁷ Author conducted Interview with Admiral An Byeong-tae.

forces. As successive CINC CFC have stated, this is an imperative in both USFK and ROK modernisation and as will be shown is a significant influence in maintaining the large defence industry and procurement links between the U.S. and the ROK.

| CLASSIFICATION | 2003 | 2006 | 2008 | 2010 |
|----------------------|---|--|--|---|
| C4ISR | TACTICAL COMMUNICATION SYSTEM UAV RADAR | AWACS GROUND TACTICAL C4I MILITARY SATELLITE GROUND RADAR | AWACS ARMY TACTICAL INFORMATION SYSTEM WEATHER SATELLITE | AWACS GROUND TACTICAL C4I HARBOUR SURVEILLANCE SYSTEM |
| MANEUVER & STRIKE | LARGE CALIBRE ARTILLERY K1A1 MBT MINE SCATTERER | K1A1 MBT K-9 ARTILLERY LANDING ATTACK ARMoured VEHICLE GOP ALERT SYSTEM | K1A1 MBT K-9 ARTILLERY NEXT INFANTRY FIGHTING VEHICLE INCOMING FIRE DETECTION RADAR | K21 IFV K-9 ARTILLERY KOREAN UTILITY HELICOPTER K-55 ARTILLERY IMPROVEMENT |
| MARITIME & LANDING | KDX-II MINE SWEEPER SAM HEAVY TORPEDO | KDX-III/II TYPE 214 SUB NEXT GEN. ESCORT VESSEL | KDX-III TYPE 214 SUB NEXT LST | KDX-III TYPE-214 SUB 2 ND GEN MINESWEEPER MINE LAYER |
| AERIAL & AIR DEFENSE | KF-16 TRAINER AIRCRAFT SHORT RANGE ANTI-AIR MISSILE | F-15K T-50 TRAINER AIRCRAFT AIR TO SURFACE MISSILE | F-15K T-50 TRAINER AIRCRAFT JOINT AIR TO SURFACE STAND-OFF MISSILE | F-15K T-50 TRAINER AIRCRAFT C-130H IMPROVEMENT PROJECT |
| R&D | | UAV KOREAN MADE HELICOPTER INTERMEDIATE HIGH ALTITUDE WEAPONS SYSTEM | NEXT TANK (K2) UAV TACTICAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK KOREAN UTILITY HELICOPTER | UAV (INTERMEDIATE LEVEL/DIVISION LEVEL) |

TABLE 5.4: List of Force Improvement Projects 2003-2010. From MND Defense White Papers 2006, 2008 , 2010 and Participatory Government Defense Policy 2003.

These links are an important element in understanding the close ties of the U.S.-ROK relationship. The ROK defence industry which underwent a large amount of modernisation during the *Yulgok* program has in recent years struggled to keep abreast of international arms developments. The overwhelming focus of the industry which is controlled indirectly by the ROK government was to develop mass production capabilities of large but often

technologically simple platforms. It lacked the R&D base to indigenously develop high-tech weaponry particularly in the areas of sensors, electronics and communications. What has followed are government led initiatives in the modern era to pursue two tracks of procurement in order to solve these problems. The first area is indigenous production and development of weapons systems either through ROK companies or ROK industrial joint ventures. This track previously being controlled by the government is now dominated by the large ROK industrial conglomerates or *Chaebols* who have squeezed out SME and receive the majority of defence procurement contracts from the government. However, at the same time this industry is seen as unprofitable by these companies whose major interests are in the civilian commercial sector.⁶⁸ This unprofitability is caused primarily by a lack of demand which has resulted in a large amount of over capacity in terms of production capability.⁶⁹ The problem has been exacerbated by the ending of the need for relatively low tech items which were previously in demand and the drop in defence budgets which have reduced procurement across the military.

Such problems have again encouraged greater government involvement in the defence industry, this involvement must be seen through the lens of a government perception that an indigenous arms industry is vital to national security so as a result tax breaks and other incentives are granted to ensure *Chaebol* involvement. While at the same time the government designates specific companies for certain areas of defence development and manufacture to prevent overlap and duplication and also sets the R&D priorities for the

⁶⁸ Surrey, E. (2006). *Transparency in the Arms Industry*, SIPRI Policy Paper No.12. 27

⁶⁹ Harris, S. (1999). South Korea- Wanting to Go it Alone. *The RUSI Journal*, 144 (4), 57-63. 59

defence industry as a whole.⁷⁰ Ultimately successive administrations have focused on using the defence industry in the ROK as a driver of growth both through employment and the export of defence material. The issue remains of the need to develop a R&D capability in order to create high tech weaponry; this has been partially achieved on an indigenous side through investment from the government, universities and defence manufacturers in R&D and through the encouraging of ROK- non-ROK company mergers either at corporate level or through cooperation on certain products.⁷¹

The second track; foreign procurement, has a close relationship with the first. The levels of foreign procurement both U.S. and non U.S. have stayed relatively similar in terms of spending as the ROK pursues big ticket items. However, the linkage between track 1 and track 2 is the use of defence offsets and licensed production to improve indigenous production capability which is a key element in the overall ROK procurement blueprint. The use of imports in this manner is one of the key reasons why the ROK has looked to Europe as manufacturers and governments in that part of the world are more open to providing favourable contracts which allow such technology transfer in comparison with the U.S.⁷² This has not stopped, the U.S. however from dominating the ROK import market through the key issues of interoperability, alliance maintenance and the military's preference for U.S. systems.

This can be seen in the purchase of the *Patriot* missile system in the face stiff competition

⁷⁰ MND (1998). 2008 Defense White Paper. MND:Seoul. 161-162

⁷¹ This was achieved through the reduction in restriction on foreign companies having holdings in ROK defence concerns.

⁷²

from European and Russian manufacturers where the ROK broadly stated that interoperability and supply chain reliability were key factors in the decision.⁷³ Indeed U.S. interest in the ROK market can be seen in the displeasure that was expressed by Washington when Seoul agreed an arms for debt deal with Russia in 1994.⁷⁴ This relationship, while becoming closer is not without its problems however. Accusations have been made by Washington about the ROK stealing technology and breaching agreements on technology transfer. Despite this the U.S. have made the ROK akin to a NATO member in terms of its FMS status which eases restrictions and oversight on sales and through an extensive push by the U.S. there is an increase in the numbers of U.S. weapons systems being purchased by the ROK.⁷⁵ This suggests a relationship where the U.S. is looking to support its alliance partner with increased weapons sales both for strategic and domestic commercial reasons while accepting a level of fraud and patent infringement. Thus the strategic and commercial benefits outweigh legal concerns in this aspect of the relationship.

The picture that has emerged regarding ROK military procurement is one of increasing operational capabilities that are underwritten by ever-closer ties to the U.S. Given the nature of U.S. forces on the peninsula and their use of high-technology, integrated and interoperable weapons the ROK has been forced to either internally design and construct or purchase weapons systems and other capabilities which also have these characteristics. They have looked to develop such systems indigenously however the inherent flaws in the ROK's defence industry mean that this is a government not privately driven endeavour and

⁷³ Suh (2007). 146

⁷⁴ Cha, V. (2001). Strategic Culture and the Military Modernization of South Korea. *Armed Forces and Society*, 28(1), 99-127. 111

⁷⁵ In 2008 the U.S. granted the ROK the same status as the NATO, Japan, Australia and New Zealand.

the production of weapons is subsidised and inefficient. As a result the ROK has looked towards also purchasing systems primarily from the U.S. to meet that lack of indigenous capability and address the need for interoperability suggesting that the U.S., despite protestations of independence from the ROK remains intertwined in the military procurement system.⁷⁶ Leading on from this drive for high-tech weapons are significant problems in meeting funding needs. This is an issue for all of the services and has affected the ROKN greatly as it traditionally has the smallest budgetary allocation. The need for high-tech weapons across the armed services must be balanced against fiscal realities, for the navy the drive for such advanced weaponry and how it is procured has shifted it toward the U.S. and for the first time in its history the ROKN has a level of technological and operational parity with the USN.

V.V THE ROKN AND THE U.S. ALLIANCE

As has been shown the U.S. has had a varied role in the development of the ROKN viewing it as being a necessary but minor part of peninsular defence, as a result it was neglected somewhat and much of the development it underwent unlike that of the ROKA was driven by the ROK and ROKN itself rather than by U.S. views of alliance needs. Thus there have been limitations on the interoperability and coordination between the USN and the ROKN exemplified by the shift in the *Yulgok* program away from U.S. equipment and towards indigenous development and weapons from other international defence suppliers. The

⁷⁶ As an indicator of the U.S. domination of foreign weapons market, in 2008 the U.S. sold almost 10 times more in terms of dollar amount to the ROK than Germany, the second largest exporter to the ROK that year. The same trend is identifiable in 2009 where again the U.S. total weapons sales were ten times the value of the next largest supplier.

period after the *Yulgok* program has seen a move in the ROKN back toward the U.S. particularly in the areas of procurement caused by the underlying influences of the alliance shift that has occurred since 1992.

As McDevitt has pointed out the USN has had relatively little experience in working with the ROKN, essentially relegating it to a secondary priority behind cooperation with JMSDF.⁷⁷ The reasons why are multiple; the aforementioned lack of U.S. interest in the ROKN for much of the period of the alliance, the lack of formal structure for U.S. naval forces to work with the ROKN, the technological mismatch between both forces combined with divergent mission sets and on a more personnel level the fact that there are no ships stationed on a permanent basis in the ROK which would facilitate the development of permanent relationships between the US and ROK navies.⁷⁸ To provide contrast, the opposite can be seen with the USN's relationship with the JMSDF, where large numbers of vessels are forward based in Japan and where JMSDF modernisation has been consistent and seen by the USN as necessary both within the context of the Cold War and the strategic needs of the U.S. in the 21st century.

Arising from this reality is the fact that the ROKN unlike the other services, which adopted a Koreanised version of U.S. air and land doctrine, was not significantly influenced by the U.S. As will be shown it was not until the mid 1990s's that the USN and ROKN began to cooperate in a manner seen with the other branches of the armed services. The independence of the ROKN was highlighted in the disparity between its littoral patrol focus and the U.S. blue

⁷⁷ McDevitt, M. (2012). The Maritime Relationship. In Snyder, S. (ed.) The U.S.-South Korea Alliance Meeting New Security Challenges. London: Lynne Rienner. 23

⁷⁸ Ibid.

water focus, which resulted in a degree of disinterest in the ROKN from the Americans. What can be drawn from this is that the initial modernisation plan drawn up by the ROKN which called for a regional operational capability combined with modern forces was not driven or influenced by the U.S. directly. More likely is that the shift in the nature of the alliance itself was a reason for the ROKN conceived and led development gaining political approval. The growing responsibilities of the ROK within the alliance led them to believe that a regional capability was desirable and commensurate with national strength and independence.

ROKN procurement in this period reflects the overall force development factors that are mentioned above. The drive for advanced naval systems in their more recent vessels namely the KDX class, the *Dokdo* LPD, the Type 214 submarine and in their procurement of air assets all match with the sensor to shooter concept. While most of the vessels procured are ROK designed they fall in with the two track approach mentioned above, being fitted with a mixture of foreign and indigenous weapons. The most important element has been the gradual transference of foreign systems back to the U.S. in the period between 1992 and 2011. As Figure: 5.2 shows the in examining the three KDX surface classes there has been a move towards deploying U.S. and indigenously designed weapons and control systems. This is most notable in the more recent platforms the KDX-III and *Incheon* class frigates, both of which have noticeably more U.S. and ROK weapons and sensors than previous vessels. This reflects the procurement policies of successive governments and in reality reflects the areas of weakness in ROK naval defence manufacturing. An example of the transition from non-U.S. to U.S. can be seen in the selection of the U.S. built *Phalanx* CIWS over the Dutch *Goalkeeper* system for the *Incheon* class. What is unusual is the fact that before this was constructed the

Dutch system was the preferred choice even in the KDX-III as such the selection of *Phalanx* is a symbol of ever closer U.S. ties in ROKN procurement.

MISSILES

| KDX-I | KDX-II | KDX-III |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •SSM: HARPOON (US) •SAM: SEA SPARROW (US) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •SSM: HARPOON (US) •SAM: SM-2 (US) •SAM: RIM-116 (US) •ASM: ASROC (US/ROK) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •SLCM: (ROK) •SSM: HARPOON (US) •SAM: SM-2 (US) •SAM: RIM-116 (US) |

GUNS

| KDX-I | KDX-II | KDX-III |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •5in. (ITALY) •CIWS (NETHERLANDS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •5in. (US) •CIWS (NETHERLANDS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •5in. (US) •CIWS (NETHERLANDS) |

TORPEDOES

| KDX-I | KDX-II | KDX-III |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •MK-46 MOD 5 (US) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •MK-46 MOD 5(US) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •K745 (ROK) |

COMBAT DATA SYSTEMS

| KDX-I | KDX-II | KDX-III |
|---|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •SSCS MK-7 (UK/ROK) •LITTON KNTDS/LINK 11 (US) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •KD COM2 (UK/ROK) •LINK11 (US) •MARCONI Mk 14 (UK) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •AEGIS 7.1 (US) •KNTDS (ROK) |

RADARS

| KDX-I | KDX-II | KDX-III |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •AIR SEARCH (US) •SURFACE SEARCH (NETHERLANDS) •FIRECONTROL (NETHERLANDS) •NAVIGATION: ROK | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •AIR SEARCH (US) •SURFACE SEARCH (NETHERLANDS) •FIRECONTROL (NETHERLANDS) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> •AIR SEARCH (US) •SURFACE SEARCH (US) •FIRECONTROL (US) |

FIGURE 5.2: Weapon & System Origin for ROKN KDX Classes. Compiled by the Author using Jane's Fighting Ships 2010.

The reasoning behind such a move is based on the needs of alliance maintenance but also surround the issue of reliability of supply. For example, the procurement of the U.S. made 5in gun for ROKN ships was agreed despite the fact that the ROK has a long history of purchasing such systems from Italian companies. The shift in supplier was primarily based on the fact that the ROKN deemed that in a time of emergency such as war the U.S. and its manufacturers would be potentially more reliable in supplying spare parts and other equipment than other foreign manufacturers.⁷⁹ This change must also be put down to the fact that no longer was there opposition from the U.S. for ROKN modernisation. Despite some concerns in congress that the ROK was investing in these capabilities and not in the ROKA, thus requiring U.S. troops to stay longer on the peninsula, the U.S. had become broadly supportive of the project, recognising the potential economic benefits of supplying weaponry to the ROKN.⁸⁰ The economic development of the ROK and the resulting end of U.S. aid provided more freedom on both sides to pursue such defence cooperation.

Operationally, ROKN modernisation became significant in that cooperative relationship between the two navies began to slowly develop. Previously, the low technological ability of the ROKN meant the USN had little interest in cooperating with the ROKN and certainly ROKN officers saw internal weakness when the ROKN could not effectively merge with USN tactics and technology. These problems were amplified by the limited number of opportunities available for coordinated operations. This was evidenced in the Lessons Learned from the 1991 Ulchi Focus Lens and Team Spirit exercises where significant problems were identified in operational coordination, tactics, a lack of expertise on the

⁷⁹ Author conducted Interview with Adm. An Byeong-tae

⁸⁰ Ibid. & *Acquiring a Global Viewpoint*. Jane's Defence Weekly 022/018. Retrieved from www.janes.com

ROKN side and communication difficulties. These problems did however in part result in an increased effort to enhance cooperation.⁸¹ The lack of a formal command system for the USN in the ROK was rectified in 1992. The naval component of the CFC is in peacetime under the control of an ROKN Admiral, in 1992 however a formal wartime chain of command was established with the Commander of the 7th fleet upon entering the AO becoming the commander of all U.S. and ROK naval in theatre and the ROK admiral becoming deputy commander.⁸² This tied the 7th fleet to ROKN operations and further evidence of this increased interest came with the 1994 request and granting of a dedicated pier in Chinhae naval base for USN use. The Lessons Learned from the 1995 Ulchi Focus. Lens and Team Spirit exercises suggest that these developments assisted in the better coordination of USN and ROKN operations and while problems still existed they indicated what could be considered a heightened interest on both sides to develop naval cooperation.

This cooperation drive commensurate with the need for C4ISR and NCW led the ROKN to develop and purchase a number of systems which allow for tactical and strategic coordination with their own forces and those of the U.S. The first of these systems was the Korea Naval Tactical Data System (KNTDS) was developed in the late 1990s by a U.S. company and later modified by Thales of France in cooperation with a ROK defence contractor. The system provides for real time information sharing and targeting between vessel and Headquarters, primarily designed for monitoring and intercepting KPN vessels around the NLL it was the first step towards integrated C2 capabilities for the fleet and is present on all large platforms. Additionally this system is interoperable with the U.S. via the

⁸¹ Cdr. Collins, R.T. (1996) *Commander Combined Naval Component Command; A Significant Change in a Command Relationship*. Unpublished Dissertation: Naval War College. 10-11

⁸² Ibid. 12

LINK 11 system. The second major project is the Korean Naval Command and Control System (KNCCS), still in the development and testing phases, this is a true C4ISR system and will when operational allow for increased levels of joint operations with the other branches of the armed services and a greater level of land based command and control. It is unclear how interoperable this system will be with USN forces but it is logical to suggest that a degree of such capability will be built in.⁸³ Finally, the ROKN has procured a number of systems that will link directly with U.S. forces, most importantly the GCCS-M system which has been procured under the FMS program as a result of USN recommendations to enhance coordination following the results of a number of joint exercises.⁸⁴ Indeed looking at the period between 2001 and 2004 the majority of systems purchased under the FMS system for the ROKN were C3 systems. This suggests that the level of cooperation and interoperability between the ROKN and USN is increasing commensurate with that on the land and that the development of C4I systems has a direct relationship both with the U.S. and the need to upgrade the ROK's command and control capabilities with the approach of OPCON transfer.

⁸³ DAPA. Naval Command and Control System KNCCS <해군지휘통제체계KNCCS>. Retrieved from DAPA website. www.dapa.go.kr

⁸⁴ Kim, Y-K. (2005). Status. of Korean Navy's Tactical C4ISR Systems Acquisition and Issues on Interoperability between ROK-U.S. Combined Naval Operations. In Mansourov, A.Y. (Ed.) *Bytes and Bullets: Information Technology Revolution and National Security on the Korean Peninsula* (pp.179-201). Asia Pacific Centre for Security Studies: Hawaii. 183

| YEAR | SHIP | SYSTEM |
|------|----------|----------------------------|
| 2001 | KDX-II | SATCOM x 2 |
| | KDX-II | GCCS-M x 2 |
| | KDX-II | ANDVT x 2 |
| 2002 | Type 214 | SATCOM x 3 |
| | Type 214 | ANDVT x 3 |
| | KDX-II | ANDVT x 3 |
| | KDX-II | GCCS-M x 3 |
| | KDX-II | SATCOM x 3 |
| | LPD | ANDVT x 1 |
| | LPD | GCCS-M x 1 |
| | LPD | SATCOM x 1 |
| | KDX-III | AEGIS x 3 |
| 2003 | LPD | GPS x 1 |
| | KDX-II | GPS x 3 |
| 2004 | ? | AN/WSN-7 Navigation System |
| | KDX-III | GCCS-M x3 |
| | KDX-III | SATCOM x 3 |
| | KDX-III | ANDVT x 3 |

Table 5.5: List of Interoperability Items Purchased under FMS . Taken From ROKN (2005). Related to the Navy Introducing Foreign Weapons <해군 해외무기 도입 관련> Seoul: ROKN.

All of these factors combine to suggest that the ROKN and the USN are becoming closer in capabilities with the ROKN complementing the USN in certain areas specifically littoral warfare and small boat operations. As Chapter Four has shown the level and number of exercises between the two country's navies has increased and for the U.S. the ROKN is an interesting facilitator of another element of their security goals in East Asia. With the U.S. pivot to Asia and the building of a number of defence cooperation structures such as the Japan-U.S.-Australia tri-lateral defence partnership, the ROK has been encouraged by the US to become more involved in regional security cooperative efforts especially in enhanced relations with Japan. Given the similarity in systems and operations between it and the JMSDF, the ROKN has been a key component in such a drive through U.S. led exercises. While the reality of enhanced ROKN-JMSDF relations have been hampered by the issues

described in Chapter Three and significant close military relations between Japan and the ROK are unlikely given the extreme political sensitivity in Seoul, the fact that the ROKN is the primary military tool which the U.S. has used demonstrates how far it has come in terms of its development and technology. While the U.S. has not driven ROKN modernisation they have certainly seen its usefulness and as wider ROK defence procurement has focused on interoperability with the U.S. the ROKN has been drawn closer to its American counter-part

V.VI CONCLUSION

The U.S. control of the Korean military following the end of the Korean War had an important foundational impact on the ROKN. As the U.S. did not see it as being a central element to ROK defence and provided little in the way of equipment and support the ROKN was allowed to develop somewhat independently, albeit within the financial and operational restrictions placed on it by both Washington and Seoul.

During the *Yulgok* program, due a combination of U.S. indifference and a growing ROK economic capability, the ROKN was able to look away from the U.S. towards outside suppliers while at the same time began with initial U.S. help to develop its own platforms. What followed was a force armed with systems made in the ROK, Europe and the U.S. and while the ROKN fell under overall control of the U.S. it was allowed a degree of independence not seen with the other ROK services. This period saw a large increase in capabilities however the focus of their operations remained on the DPRK and despite the building of frigates and the production of submarines the ROK remained a force rooted in

the littoral. The U.S. played a fluctuating role in deciding the ROKN's fate providing some platforms but ultimately became a secondary factor in ROKN modernisation.

Ironically a change was to occur as a result of the growing independence of the ROK and the decreasing size yet increasingly modern nature of USFK. As the ROK began to assume more responsibility in the alliance it was forced to alter procurement so that its forces would be interoperable with their US counterparts. This must be seen within the context of OPCON transfer and the gradual embrace of RMA within the ROK, thus for the ROKN as it underwent blue water modernisation in the 1990s and 2000s it developed many of its systems in line with wider ROK trends. What followed was a push for indigenous technology bolstered by foreign equipment and as the ROK required its forces to work with the U.S. the ROKN followed suit and began to move back towards its alliance partner.

Thus defining the U.S. as a driver of ROKN modernisation would be incorrect. Its influence over the ROK military had a clear effect on the ROKN. Yet the early indifference shown by the U.S. to the ROKN has meant that it has to large extent followed its own path. While initially resistant to ROKN modernisation the U.S. has now embraced the concept of an interoperable and capable ROKN and has looked to it as a valuable partner within their East Asian security network.

CHAPTER 6

THE ROKN AND A NAVAL IDENTITY

VI.I INTRODUCTION

The importance of national identity in the cultural, strategic or naval spheres lies in its ability to define the desires, directions and motivations of the state in question. As Holmes eloquently states,

*'Expectations flowing from national identity, traditions, and habits of mind allow ruling elites to set the terms of national discourse, but past expectations entrenched in public attitudes and institutions fetter elites' strategic options.'*¹

Therefore a naval or maritime identity is one that is formed out of the traditions of the country, is ever present in the public and political mindset and is used to inform the decisions made by the ruling elites. At the same time it must be recognised that such an identity is not a natural one, but is rather something that must be developed from the underlying identities of land, religion and social structure. This can be seen in other maritime states such as Britain, Venice and the Netherlands where economic, geo-strategic and social elements have combined in the past to create maritime and naval identities which have built upon existing societal constructs. The fact that such an identity is to some extent artificial, being constructed rather than naturally formed, means that it must be purposely

¹ Holmes, J. R. (2006). *China Fashions A Maritime Identity. Issues & Studies*. 42(3). 87-128. 97

maintained in order to remain in the minds of both the people and the elites. For the ROK and before that Korea a naval identity has only been extant in brief periods and the reality is that for the majority of its history the peninsula has not maintained any sense of a formal relationship with the sea.

Examining the historical, strategic and cultural traits which make up the identity to the ROK is especially complicated. Unlike, Japan which suffered the shock of Commodore Perry's arrival in Uraga but was politically unified and worked to connect Japan's security with naval power and in the process created a naval identity which survived the devastating defeat in WWII and subsequently grew in to a central tenant of national security in the post cold war era.² The ROK being a country created out of the geopolitical competition in Asia following WWII, has a security identity and perception which is driven not only by the historical memory of Japanese invasion and Chinese suzerainty but the division of the peninsula born out of the Geneva accords and subsequently cemented by the Korean War and as has been shown is one that is overwhelmingly land based.³

This threat assessment in combination with a focus on internal state development in the period after the Korean War resulted in the ROK having an inward focus. Mirroring the period of Korean history in the 19th century which earned the country the name of the hermit kingdom, the ROK which is one part of a divided country of singular race and language has placed its sights inland focused on this most trenchant of land issues and as a

² Sajima, N. & Tachikawa, K (2009) *Japanese Sea Power a Maritime Nation's Struggle for Identity*. Canberra: Sea Power Centre. 6-7

³ Moon, Chung-in. (1998) South Korea Recasting Security Paradigms. In Alagappa, Muthiah(ed.) *Asian Security Practice Material and Ideational Influence*.(pp 264-287). Stanford: Stanford University Press. 267

result failed to create a significant identification, naval or otherwise with the sea.

The advent of democracy in 1993 in combination with a concurrent internal drive toward globalisation and a developing global footprint heralded a reassessment of the ROK's security policies. An ever increasing military advantage over the DPRK, together with a sometimes softer policy towards the North following the end of the Cold War allowed a new set of civilian elites to redefine what ROK security is and what has followed is a recognition that isolation was not advantageous and that international cooperation and alliances were necessary to safeguard the ROK. Despite the democratisation and liberalisation of the ROK, the security debate while opening up still remains in the hands of a select circle, with all but major security issues being overlooked by the body politic.⁴ This is in part a reflection of the economic and societal priorities of the electorate but is also a legacy of the past military domination of the political system where debate over national security policy was difficult and sometimes forbidden due to stringent security laws.

A consequence of these changes was that the ROKN was provided with the opportunity to re-establish itself in the minds of the public and the government and to create a sense of identity within the ROK towards the ocean. The difficulties and importance of doing so were acknowledged in 1998 when in Navy Vision 2020 the ROKN asserted,

'The navy has been seeking public support to legitimise the development of an ocean going navy to perform a naval role in the future ocean period. In order to inform the public about the importance of naval construction, naval members, their families and

⁴ Ibid. 276 & Author conducted interview with Park, Jin Korean National Assembly Representative & former Press Secretary to Kim, Young-sam

*veterans have been leading the way, also the navy has been trying to inform the public about naval development through the National Assembly, the Government and the media. However these efforts have not reached our expectations....*⁵

The methods of how the ROKN have gone about developing its standing within the ROK's security structure, moving toward a force capable of more than littoral operations and developing toward answering the ROK's future security concerns is what this chapter will address. There has been a concerted effort to persuade the elite and of the necessity of a regional force and a concurrent effort to alter the public's perception of the ROK through the attempted creation of a naval and maritime identity for the ROK. The importance of these efforts rests on the reality that without a sustained attempt to change internal perceptions a wider role for the ROKN would not be politically or financially sustainable.

Utilising government primary sources and author conducted interviews, the chapter is divided into three parts. The first, examines the historical context of maritime affairs in the ROK. It looks at the atrophy of the Korean and latterly ROK maritime identity and demonstrates the ROKN's efforts to recreate a naval identity through the use of historical figures as signposts for the ROKN's role and future within the ROK's security architecture. The second part, examines the ROKN's attempts to connect with the public through the use of mass media and public events. The third part shows the ROKN's and naval institute's efforts to raise the level of naval thought amongst both the general public but more importantly political elites, through the use of shipboard seminars and academic works. Finally the conclusion draws together the previous sections, examining the success and

⁵ Republic of Korea Navy Headquarters (1998) *Navy Vision 2020* <해군비전 2020> Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 79

failure of these efforts highlighting the importance of the ROKN's attempts to create a naval identity within the ROK to safeguard its own development.

VI.II HISTORY AND IDENTITY: A PLACE FOR THE ROKN

Taking Till's two concepts of sea power, either organic (United Kingdom, Netherlands) or artificial (Imperial German Navy), it is plausible to suggest the ROK lies between these two concepts.⁶ As a peninsular nation, the history of Korea and its relationship with the sea is a mixed one. Early Korean history shows a healthy maritime interaction with the sea being used by Korean peoples as early as the 7th century BC for trade.⁷ Later in the 5th-7th centuries AD the Kokuryo, Bakje and Shilla kingdoms all exploited the sea for trade, exploration and defence.⁸ With the development of capable vessels, Korea's maritime presence reached its zenith with the activities of Chang, Bo-go (790-846 AD) a merchant turned naval officer, who exploited Korean maritime superiority to crush the threat of Japanese and Chinese piracy and dominate the trade links of Northeast Asia.⁹ After his death Korean maritime activity declined slowly, while still developing and building ships, 900 of which were used in the second Mongol invasion of Japan in the 13th century, its influence waned and while its naval forces were to an extent maintained its trading activities fell away.¹⁰ It was only in the 16th century that the sea and naval power once again were placed

⁶ Till, Geoffrey. (2009). *Seapower A Guide for the Twenty-First Century*. Oxon: Routledge. 83

⁷ ROKN Headquarters. *Republic of Korea Navy* <대한민국 해군> Gyeryong-dae: ROKN Headquarters. 10.

Retrieved from <http://www.navy.mil.kr/news/ebook/pr/lifewz.htm>

⁸ Ibid. 11-15

⁹ Seth, Michael J. (2011). *A History of Korea from Antiquity to the Present* [Kindle Edition]. 66. Retrieved from www.amazon.co.uk

¹⁰ ROKN Headquarters. 18

at the forefront of national security when Japan invaded the Korean peninsula in 1592. The activities of Admiral Yi, Sun-shin who fought and died fighting the Japanese have become Nelsonic in stature within Korean history, through disrupting Japanese supply lines and defeating enemy fleets in numerous coastal engagements he significantly contributed to the withdrawal of the Japanese forces and marked a final high point Korean naval activity.¹¹ Despite maintaining a naval fleet in the 17th and 18th centuries, the ruling Chosun dynasty essentially neglected the sea due to a combination of political infighting, socio-cultural opposition and eventual inward looking isolationist policies.¹² Korea while successful in achieving internal social stability fell victim to the rise of western powers in the region and the expansion of Japanese interest on mainland Asia. By the end of the 19th century, under Japanese pressure the Korean navy was disbanded and the colonisation of Korea in 1910 by Imperial Japan cemented the end of a Korean maritime or naval presence until after the Second World War. Despite claiming a deep history of maritime and naval activities what is clear is that Korea's exploitation of the sea was periodic, by the end of 10th century Korean maritime and naval activity was already in decline and the sea was viewed as a buffer between Korea and the surrounding powers, something to be defended rather than exploited.¹³

The pre-eminence of the land theatre and adjunct role of the ROKN in post-war ROK defence policy resulted in the loss of any ROK naval or maritime identity that once existed in the

¹¹ Ibid. 21-26

¹² Park, S Y. (2009) *The Development of the Republic of Korea Navy in a Changing National Defense and Northeast Asian Security Environment*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation: University of Salford. 2

¹³ As will be shown the ROKN has made a concerted effort to link its own development with Korea's maritime past, specifically through utilising the legends of Chang, Bo-go and Yi, Sun-shin to provide context for the navy's importance in modern ROK society,

political or public spheres. As President Kim Dae-jung wrote in 1981 before his time in office:

*'In spite of the fact that our country faces the ocean on three sides, we have refused completely to recognise this reality. This is why we have been bothered so persistently by the Japanese. If we were to try to identify the great navigators or others engaged in maritime activities, Chang Po-go from the late Silla period is about the only one that comes to mind'*¹⁴

Despite the sentiments in this quotation which highlight an ingrained ignorance of the sea in Korean culture, the development of the ROK's economy, a focus on international trade and the construction of a potent ship-building industry saw an increase in the ROK's maritime activities, something which raised the importance of the sea to a political and economic necessity and became key to the ROKN's attempts to create a ROK naval identity through reactivating memories of Korea's past naval prowess. It is this author's belief that as a result it is not an artificial identity that is being created but it is a reactivation and modification of the naval and maritime regional role that Korea played for limited portions of its history; Reactivation through the use of past historical figures and modification through cultivating them as reasons for ROKN development not only in a local setting but on a regional and quasi-global stage also.

This can be seen with the considered effort of the ROKN to draw upon the history of Korea and the ROK to link it with the populace and influence the political classes. Utilising, a technique of naming ships that identify with the public consciousness, the ROKN has duplicated the efforts of the Imperial German Navy during the end of the 19th and beginning

¹⁴ Quotation taken from: Seth Michael J. (2011) 495.

of the 20th century. In that period the Imperial navy utilised towns and cities for their ship names as a tool of national unification. They also drew upon famous German military leaders, mostly from the land in order to provide the navy with a type of artificial martial tradition, as Rüger states '*the military past was to offer the navy an Ersatz tradition, it served as a source of national identification*'.¹⁵ Germany was not alone in utilising such tools; the Royal Navy too drew upon the names of cities and great military leaders as a method of solidifying the Union as part of one great maritime tradition.¹⁶ And while the ROKN efforts should not be seen as so deliberate as these two navies who were part of an attempt to build or sustain empires, the parallels provide insight into what the ROKN is attempting to achieve in naming its ships after people and places that are culturally identifiable and the importance of creating a navy that is linked to a nation's history and people.

1) THE USE OF HISTORY

Korean history does possess naval figures, but these were either lost or used in a non-naval context with the creation of the ROK. The security identity of the ROK being formed in the Korean War, excludes any major ROK naval involvement leaving the navy sidelined as a bit part player in what was portrayed as and to a major extent was a ground war. This is evidenced by the War Memorial of Korea in Seoul, which marginalises ROKN activities during the Korean War and does not place a Korean naval legacy within any significant context.¹⁷ A further challenge is presented by the Korean public's unwillingness to engage in matters of defence which don't affect them directly. As such major incidents receive great attention but

¹⁵ Rüger, J. (2007) *The Great Naval Game Britain and Germany in the Age of Empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 159

¹⁶ Ibid. 166

¹⁷ Author's observations during visit to the War Memorial of Korea in October 2011

every day matters of force posture and development are not subject to large amounts of public scrutiny.¹⁸

While Korea and the ROK have had many heroes few are of a naval background, the most notable exception being Yi, Sun-shin. Following his death his legacy has been used in various ways throughout recent Korean history to promote certain ideals from nationalism to the conception of a perfect Korean character. Within the scope of this thesis it is important to examine how his legacy was used in the post-war ROK, as this period is central to defining the historical and security consciousness of the public. The first and establishing use of Adm. Yi came during the Park, Chung-hee era. The military dictator who ruled the country from 1961-1979 looked to use Korean history to emphasise certain elements of his policies and to provide commentary on the state of the nation, Yi, Sun-shin was central to this.¹⁹ His characterisations progressed from a national hero in the early 1960's to someone who had been at the forefront of modernisation (this occurred during a period of accelerated economic growth in the late 1960s) through his development of the turtle ship. And finally under Park's reign he became the perfect Korean, loyal and willing to serve the nation.²⁰ This reflected a time when national security was a major concern in the ROK and issues such

¹⁸ Interview with Representative Park, Jin. Recent evidence of this can be found in both a positive and negative light. The sinking of the *Cheonan-ham* in 2010 cast negative attention on the ROKN and defence establishment. In contrast the rescue of crew of the *MV Samho Jewelry* off the coast of Somalia in early 2011 brought a lot of coverage to the ROKN and their anti-piracy actions. Finally the construction of the naval base on Jeju Island which started in mid-2011 has once again raised the level of public debate the nature of the ROK security and naval development. This has become such an emotive issue, that the ROKN has set-up a website in an attempt to allay fears, see www.jejunbase.mil.kr (in Korean).

¹⁹ Roh, Young-koo (2004) Yi, Sun-shin, An Admiral who Became a Myth. *The Review of Korean Studies* 7(3) 15-36 . 29-31

²⁰ An example of this use of Admiral Yi can be seen in the statue built in the centre of Seoul in 1967. While the naval context is acknowledged with the depiction of the small turtle ship beside the figure of Yi, the statue is designed to portray the ideals of protection and patriotism. Information from Korean Tourist Organisation and authors own observation of the statue. Retrieved from www.visitkorea.or.kr (20/11/2011)

as conscription and the use of reserve forces were at the forefront of the national debate.²¹

He has since progressed in to an amalgam of the above qualities, and is popularly celebrated within the ROK. Indeed a number of movies and television dramas have been made to celebrate his life.

As a result of the ideological positioning of Admiral Yi, he is not often portrayed within the naval context and as such has not entered the public's mind as primarily a naval figure. However, the naval community has made efforts to reclaim Yi's legacy, by utilising lectures, imagery and publications the ROKN and naval institutes have sought to create a recognisable linkage between Yi, the importance of the sea in the ROK's defence and the dangers of ignoring the sea in favour of the land in establishing the ROK's security identity. As Olsen points out Yi was primarily a coastal admiral and as such his use to promote a blue-water force is problematic.²² Thus while Yi is mentioned numerous times throughout navy publications, he is positioned as a naval defender of Korean sovereignty and as such fits the navy's ideational development as an essential force in defending the ROK from future threats. As can be seen in Table 6.1 the ROKN named two vessels in honour of the admiral, they built a replica of a turtle ship which is on occasional display at the Korean Naval Academy and the Naval War College symbol (see Figure: 6.1) contains a stylisation of a Turtle Ship.²³

²¹ Roh, Y.-k. (2004) .29-31

²² Olsen, E. (1989) *Prospects for an Increased Naval Role for the Republic of Korea in Northeast Asian Security*. Unpublished Thesis : Naval War College. 10

²³ Based on the author's visit to Jinhae Naval Base (April 2011)



Figure 6.1: Symbol of the ROKN Naval War College

While the use of Yi, Sun-shin is adequate to inculcate the concept of the ROKN being central to protecting the ROK, it is not sufficient to create a narrative that suggests a blue-water role for the organisation. In order to meet this requirement the ROKN has looked to Chang, Bo-go, the great merchant and quasi-admiral of the 9th century. This period was probably the era of Korea's greatest maritime activity, where Korean ships dominated the regions waters and were used for trade and transport between Japan, Korean and Northern China. Chang was central to this domination controlling trade and possessing a private navy to defend Korean trade from the ever present threat of pirates.²⁴

His position within the Korean historical narrative is difficult to judge. He is certainly representative of an effort to publicise Silla maritime history and is seen as an archetypal Korean legend. There is also some indication that his profile is rising within the ROK with the making of TV drama about his life in 2004 and a museum dedicated to his control of East Asian maritime sphere being opened near his traditional base on the Island of Wan (Wan-do) in 2008.²⁵ For the ROKN however he is more important. Featured alongside Yi, Sun-shin, he has become the ideational justification for an expanded regional and even global ROK naval presence. It is no coincidence that Kim, Young-sam the first President to support a regional naval role was also the first to link Chang with the future of the ROKN in a speech made to the Korean Naval Academy in 1994, saying:

²⁴ Seth Michael J. (2011) .66

²⁵ Information retrieved from Wando County Administration website www.eng.wando.go.kr (20/11/2011)

'We are surrounded by the ocean on three sides but have never taken advantage of it. The great achievements of Admiral Chang Bo-go were not properly followed. However now, in terms of change and revolution we are heading to the Pacific Ocean with confidence'.²⁶

A further example of this ideational importance is the naming of the ROKN's anti-piracy mission off the coast of Somalia "Cheonghae" after Chang's garrison on the south coast of Korea and the naming of the first Type-209 submarine in his honour.²⁷

Additional proof of the importance of these two figures comes from their use by the political figures when speaking about the future of the navy. While it can be said these were made in the context of naval academy commencement ceremonies, it is important to note these occasions are the primary arena for announcement of naval policy and as such are aimed at a much wider audience than just that of the ROKN.

'The Navy has a duty of guaranteeing the safety of all ships and tankers going far and near in the glorious tradition of Admirals Yi, Sun-shin and Chang, Po-go.'-Kim, Dae-jung (2000)²⁸

'Our navy has a brilliant legacy, indeed. Four hundred years ago, the navy of the Joseon Kingdom, under the command of Yi, Sun-shin, saved the nation that was like a flickering candle before the storming invaders...You are the true descendents of Jang, Bo-go, the great commissioner of the Cheonghae garrison, and Yi, Sun-shin. Your

²⁶ Kim, Young-sam (1994) Address by President Kim, Young-sam at the 48th Graduation and Commissioning Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy. Retrieved from http://www.pa.go.kr/online_contents/speech/speech02/1307942_4248.html

²⁷ 'Anti-Piracy Naval Unit Inaugurated' Korea Times (03/03/2009)

²⁸ Kim, Dae-jung "In the Glorious Traditions of Admirals Yi Sun-shin and Chang-Po-go: At the 54th Commencement Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy (March 16th 2000) In *Government of the People: Selected Speeches of Kim, Dae-jung Vol. III* (Seoul: Office of the President of the Republic of Korea, 2001) .73-74

heartbeat is powered by the spirit of Chang, Bo-go who once had absolute control over all East Asian seas.’ - Roh, Moo-hyun (2003)²⁹

‘You will be the core members to staff the major task fleet the Korean Navy will be building up. You are the descendents of Commissioner Chang, Po-go who controlled the East Asian sea routes and Admiral Yi, Sun-shin who saved the country from foreign invaders.’ - Roh, Moo-hyun (2007)³⁰

What these excerpts show is a deliberate attempt by two presidents to foster a naval identity through linking current future roles of the ROKN to significant figures of the past. How the two figures are used in the speeches matches the hypothesis that Adm. Yi is the main ideational symbol of naval protection and Chang, Bo-go the symbol of blue water development.

2) THE ROKN AND SHIP NAMES

The naming of the first Type 209, the *Chang Bogo* emphasised not only the importance of this figure to the ROKN but also signified a wider move toward naming newly commissioned vessels with a more symbolic purpose in mind. Following the *Chang Bogo*, the majority of modern ships of the ROKN have been named after significant historical figures or patriots, all of whom played a role in either the development or defence of Korea as a whole or of the ROK. The reasoning behind this decision was twofold; firstly, this was an effort to instil within the officers and sailors of the ROKN a conceptualisation of the importance of the navy and to promote the concepts of operating with pride and living up to the names on which the

²⁹ Roh, Moo-hyun (2003) “Address by President Roh Moo-hyun at the 57th Graduation and Commissioning Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy” (13/03/2003) retrieved from www.16cwnd.pa.gov.kr (19/07/2011)

³⁰ Roh, Moo-hyun (2003) “Address by the President Roh, Moo-hyun at the 61st Graduation and Commissioning Ceremony” (02/03/2007) retrieved from www.16cwnd.pa.gov.kr (19/07/2011)

modern navy had based its identity.³¹ Secondly, it is evident that the ROKN was attempting to provide the public with a clear idea of what the ROKN stood for and that it not the other services were the true antecedents of past Korean heroes

The naming of ships is under the control of the Chief of Naval Operations (CNO), and now operates under the seemingly semi-official policy of naming destroyer class ships after kings and generals, frigates after cities, the newer fast patrol ships after recent naval heroes and submarines after freedom fighters and Korean patriots.³² The advice given to each CNO and how he chooses the name changes with each change of command, however it is clear that they act on the advice not only of their staff but of academics as well looking to choose a name that is appropriate to symbolise the function of the vessel.³³ As one former CNO stated, the choosing of the ship's name is extremely important as it is a clear link to the status of the country both internally and externally.³⁴ Importantly it is the newer vessels capable of regional and offensive operations that have been named after historical figures. This is an indication of the ROKN's linkage of past military heroes both naval and otherwise with its growing importance and role within the ROK's security apparatus. An examination of these names provides clues in to the ideational construct the ROKN is attempting to create. Each of the names utilised by the ROKN are related to either nation building or national protection efforts and provides a window into the image the ROKN is attempting to project, that of a service who is the successor of those who had protected and developed the Korean state and is now focused on being at the forefront of national security and state

³¹ Interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae (April 2011) & Admiral Song, Keun-ho (April 2011)

³² Republic of Korea Navy (2010) *Navy <해군>* Seoul: Republic of Korea Navy (e-book retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr 05/08/2011)

³³ Interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae (April, 2011)

³⁴ *ibid*

development.

A point to note that many of the names below fought the Japanese during different periods of Korean history, the use of such figures has been construed as a deliberate signal that the ROKN views the Japanese as a significant threat. However, in reality while Japan does form part of the ROK's security and threat perception, the use of such figures reflects the reality that the major naval threats faced by Korea throughout its history have come from Japan. This has been built upon so that during this period of naval transformation, academics, admirals and even politicians have all stated that it was essential that the ROK does not forget the mistakes of the past that endangered Korean people.³⁵ An example of this can be seen in the inauguration speech of the 27th ROKN CNO Admiral Jung, Ok-Keun who stated when talking about the need for advanced forces,

*“Nations who fail to learn from history have retrogressed or perished” and “if future vision does not exist, neither will development nor hope”, we must take deeply into heart [sic] the historical facts and grim reality’.*³⁶

This argument strongly points towards Japan as they have been the main maritime threat throughout Korean history and clearly has deep meaning for the Korean public. Thus it is evident that Japan certainly has a major ideational role in the transformation of the ROKN, they provide a historical justification and ideological bedrock with which the ROKN's naval identity has been formed. And while such names resonate with the general level of suspicion

³⁵ The Korean Institute for Maritime Strategy, an organisation closely linked to the ROKN and the primary analysts of naval affairs in Korea publish a small number of books on Korean Naval development that support this argument. See: Kang, Young-o (ed.) (2007), *The Nation and the Strategy of the Sea <나라와 바다의 전략>* Seoul: Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy. 142-173; Moon, 7-29

³⁶ *“Chief of Naval Operations Change of Command Ceremony(26th & 27th)”*, Seoul: Navy News, (21-03-2008) retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr (24/02/10).

and nationalist tendencies amongst Korean people when it comes to ROK-Japanese relations, they should not be construed as signal of future intent but as attempts by the ROKN to link itself with the strongest possible historical identifiers of Korean independence and nationalism.

An example of this is the naming in 2007 of the ROKN's new LPH class of ship as the *Dokdo* class. Given the importance of Dokdo and its place as the most important maritime issue for the ROK populace, it is unsurprising that the ROKN named its largest ship after it. Indeed it is evident that the ROKN had always intended to name the ship in relation to the Island, the actual use of this name caused a minor diplomatic spat with the Japanese who took offence to the name and made an official protest.^{37 38} What becomes clear is that the ROKN had a number of reasons for using the island, the first being the public and its ability to better understand the function of not only the ship but also the navy as a whole as was made clear at the launching ceremony where Admiral Ahn Ki-seok the then CNO said,

*"The Dokdo ship reflects the Korean people's desire for the Navy to faithfully carry out its mission of protecting the national interest in oceans, as well as guarding out territorial sovereignty."*³⁹

Secondly, the name had an important political purpose, not only did the announcement of its name occur at a time when Japanese-ROK relations were strained mainly due to perceived Japanese revisionism related to ROK-Japanese history (of which Dokdo's status

³⁷ "South Korea Mulls Naming Destroyer (sic) After Defender of Disputed Islands" (Seoul: Kyodo News Agency, 28/03/05).

³⁸ Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2005). *Comment by MOFAT Spokesperson on Japan's Expression of Regret Concerning the Name of "Dokdo Ham"* (15/07/2005) retrieved from www.mofat.go.kr (01/02/2010)

³⁹ Jung, Sung-ki. "Navy Commissions Large Landing Ship" (Seoul: Navy News, 19/07/2007) retrieved from www.navy.mil.kr (08/02/2010).

played a central role) thus reinforcing the ROK's right of sovereignty over the island, it also served to emphasise to politicians the importance of the ROKN to the future of ROK security and national identity through linking it with the primary maritime dispute involving the country.

A second point that can be derived from the examination of the ship names is the linkage with more modern naval figures and heroes. For the ROKN Sohn, Won-il the ROKN founder looms large in its historical identity, typically placed alongside Chang, Bo-go and Yi, Sun-shin in ROKN literature, he is viewed as both a patriot and Korean War Hero. Additionally unlike the ROK army whose founding leaders served under the Japanese military during the WWII and the Japanese occupation, Adm. Sohn did not; indeed he had to leave Korea because of his anti-Japanese activities.⁴⁰ This allowed the ROKN to posit the view that they are not tainted by the Japanese occupation; as a result they named their newest submarine in his honour. Also the ROKN has honoured the men who died in the 2nd battle of Yeonpyeong; this was, as pointed out in the Korean press at the time, unusual as it was likely to raise a diplomatic issue with the DPRK.⁴¹ What it shows is that not only is the ROKN looking to honour its heroes but also its willingness to emphasise that it is they, not the other services who are the main force protecting the ROK from DPRK aggression.

⁴⁰ Republic of Korea Navy (2011) .33

⁴¹ 'New Patrol Boat to be Named after Killed Soldier' Korea Times (15/06/2007)

DESTROYERS

Project Name: KDX-III Class Name: *King Sejong the Great*

| HULL NUMBER | NAME | NOTES |
|-------------|-----------------------|---|
| DDG 991 | King Sejong the Great | King Sejong of the Joseon dynasty ruled between 1418 and 1450; he is credited with inventing Hangul (the Korean alphabet), upgrading the military significantly and defeating a large number of Japanese Pirates. |
| DDG 992 | Yulgok Yi L | Yi, Yul-gok was a 16 th century scholar who advocated the training of a large army to fight of the Japanese. |
| DDG 993 | Seoae Ryu Seong-ryong | Yu, Seong-ryong was a Korean scholar and prime-minister who was in office at the time of the 16 th century Japanese invasion of Korea. He oversaw all military units during the conflict. |

Project Name: KDX-II Class Name: *Chungmugong Yi Sun shin*

| HULL NUMBER | NAME | NOTES |
|-------------|-------------------------|--|
| DDH 975 | Chungmugong Yi Sun Shin | Yi, Sun-shin is one of the most prominent figures in Korean history. As an admiral, he defeated the Japanese on numerous occasions and is credited with designing the Turtle Ship. |
| DDH 976 | Munmu the Great | A 7 th Century Silla King, he is credited with defeating the Tang invasion of Korea and unifying the peninsula. |
| DDH 977 | Dae Joyeong | An 8 th century king who created the Balhae and defeated a Chinese Tang invasion. |
| DDH 978 | Wang Geon | A 10 th Century King who founded the Goryeo dynasty. |
| DDH 979 | Kang Gamchan | A Goryeo general he is credited with defeating the Mongolian Khitan invasion in the 11 th Century. |
| DDH 981 | Choi Young | A Goryeo general of the 12 th Century, among his many victories was the defeat of the Japanese Wokou pirates. |

Project Name: KDX-I Class Name: *Gwanggaeto the Great*

| HULL NUMBER | NAME | NOTES |
|-------------|----------------------|---|
| DDH 971 | Gwanggaeto the Great | A major Korean historical figure, he is, as a King of Goguryeo credited with greatly expanding the power and influence of his dynasty. |
| DDH 972 | Eulji Mundeok | A 7 th century Goguryeo general, he defeated a major Sui Chinese invasion despite numerical inferiority. He is regarded as one of the earliest symbols of Korean nationalism |
| DDH 973 | Yang Manchun | A 7 th century military commander, Yang is famous for refusing to surrender a fortress and thus delaying and eventually defeating a Tang invasion. |

PATROL SHIPS

Project Name: PKX (PKG-A/PKG-B)

Class Name: *Gumdoksuri*

| HULL NUMBER | NAME | NOTES |
|-------------|---------------|---|
| PKG 711 | Yoon Youngha | A lieutenant Commander in the ROKN he was killed during the 2 nd Battle of Yeonpyeong in 2002. |
| PKG 712 | Han Sanggook | A Chief Petty Officer who was killed in the 2 nd Battle of Yeonpyeong |
| PKG 713 | Jo Chunhyung | A Petty Officer who was killed during the 2 nd Battle of Yeonpyeong |
| PKG 714 | Hwang Dohyun | A Petty Officer who was killed during the 2 nd Battle of Yeonpyeong |
| PKG 715 | Suh Hoowon | A Chief Petty Officer who was killed during the 2 nd Battle of Yeonpyeong |
| PKG 716 | Park Donghyuk | A Petty Officer who was killed during the 2 nd Battle of Yeonpyeong |
| PKG 717 | Hyun Sihak | A former ROKN admiral who was instrumental in the Hungnam evacuation during the Korean War. |

SUBMARINES

Project Name: Type 209

Class Name: *Chang Bogo class*

| HULL NUMBER | NAME | NOTES |
|-------------|-------------|--|
| SS 061 | Chang Bogo | A 9 th century seafarer and admiral who controlled the West Sea and the trade routes to China. |
| SS 062 | Lee Chun | A 13 th Century Korean admiral |
| SS 063 | Choi Moosun | A 12 th Century Korean scientist and general who is credited with bring gun-powder to Korea and aiding in the defeat of the Japanese Wokou pirates. |
| SS 065 | Park Wi | A 14 th century Korean admiral who defeated the Japanese. |
| SS 066 | Lee Jongmoo | A 15 th Century Korean admiral who fought the Japanese. |
| SS 067 | Jung Woon | A Korean officer who died fighting the Japanese under Yi, Sun-shin. |
| SS068 | Lee sunsin | The second ship named after Yi sun-shin (this is written in a different form of Romanisation). |
| SS 069 | Na Daeyong | Ship builder and sailor under Yi, sun-shin. |
| SS 071 | Lee Eokgi | An officer who fought under Yi, Sun-shin and died while attacking the Japanese. |

Project Name: Type 214

Class Name: *Son Wonyil*

| HULL NUMBER | NAME | NOTES |
|-------------|------------|---|
| SS 072 | Son Wonyil | The founder of ROKN and central pillar to the historical narrative it uses. |

| | | |
|--------|-------------|--|
| SS 073 | Jeong Ji | A Goryeo general who defeated Japanese invaders. |
| SS 075 | An Chunggun | An Independence freedom fighter, who assassinated Ito Hirobumi, the Japanese Resident General of Korea. He was later executed for this action. |

TABLE 6.1 ROKN Ship Names and their origin.

VI.III PUBLIC PRESENTATION

In addition to the efforts of institutional and national identity creation further attempts have been made to alter the public perception of the ROKN. This has been done in number of ways, most obviously is the production of publicity booklets explaining the roles and duties of the navy. These are updated irregularly and they should be seen within the context of a military culture that traditionally was closed and felt little or no need to engage with the public. A clear example of this kind of promotion was in 1998 with the production of two booklets, the first entitled '*Towards a 21st Century Navy*' was the first attempt by the ROKN to publically explain the purpose and function of navies in general and the importance of the ROK developing its naval power in terms of the ROK's economic development, national security and its place on the world stage.⁴² The second booklet entitled 'Navy' explained the current role and operations of the ROKN, also it addresses Korean naval history to a limited degree, the services provided to the Korean public by the ROKN and finally what future plans for the ROKN including blue-water development.⁴³ This booklet became a template for

⁴² Republic of Korea Navy (1998 a) *Towards a 21st Century Navy* <21세기를 향한 해군> Seoul: Republic of Korea Navy.

⁴³ Republic of Korea Navy (1998) *Navy* <해군>. Seoul: Republic of Korea Navy

future ROKN publications, which while not truly growing in terms of detail, have served to emphasise the importance of the ROKN and raise its presence in the public's consciousness.⁴⁴ More recently as the ROKN has seemingly become more accustomed to releasing information, informational booklets have begun to contain more information about the roles of the navy and importantly its future. A clear example of this is the publication of '*Navy Vision 2030*' in 2008. This paper contains key information regarding the future of the ROKN and unlike its predecessor '*Navy Vision 2020*', was released in an abridged form to the public. This is significant as '*Navy Vision 2020*' was classified and therefore not available for public viewing. While this gradual loosening of military censorship has allowed for a more detailed public examination of naval policy, reflecting the growing importance of influencing the electorate, they are still to some extent limited. In comparison with the US Navy for example the ROKN's publications are sparse on detail especially regarding doctrine and the key tenants of naval operations. There is for comparison purposes no ROKN version of the US Navy's '*Forward from the Sea*' or '*Navy Operational Concept*' in terms of breadth of detail.

Additionally, the ROKN has proved itself adept at using modern communication technology as is befitting the world leader in internet connectivity. It maintains two websites, the first www.navy.mil.kr has a surprising large amount of information about the ROKN especially in comparison to its service rivals, the second being an i-news website <http://navy.korea.kr> dedicated to ROKN news and it operates a blog which is generally written by serving members of the navy <http://blue-paper.tistory.com/>. This embrace of modern technology is

⁴⁴ The author has found 5 iterations of this publicity material. There is little variation with the exception of the e-book published in 2011 (see footnote 7). This contains much more detail about Korean Naval history and about the various roles of the ROKN.

a key part of the ROKN's efforts to engage with the public and the development of such key technologies is central to future ROKN plans to create a naval culture within the ROK.⁴⁵ These technology based PR exercises run hand in hand with '*Activities for Maritimization (sic) of the People*', these efforts include picture and essay writing contests to increase the level of maritime thought amongst the citizens, navy sponsored sports events and onboard ship visits for the public.⁴⁶ These events, specifically the onboard visits and increasing the visibility of the ROKN warships are another key element of the ROKN's vision to increase public awareness and in the ROKN's words '*present the [sic] progressive maritime thoughts to the people*'.^{47 48} Indeed the ROKN have been criticised by the National Assembly Defense Committee for utilising its major platforms for the promotional purposes rather than military ones. This suggests the high priority placed by the ROKN on selling itself to the public through demonstrating its most modern assets.



Figure 6.2: ROKN Logo

Alongside these more general efforts to insert the ROKN more firmly in to the public's consciousness a concerted effort has been made to alter the navy's image to express the independence and importance of the service. The primary example of this was the release of a new naval slogan: '*To the Sea To The World*', this slogan adorned the majority of ROKN

publications and was prominent in its social media.⁴⁹ Its function is to promote the ideals of

⁴⁵ Republic of Korea Navy (2008a) *Navy Vision 2030* <해군비전 2030>. Gyeongdae: ROKN Headquarters. 63

⁴⁶ ROKN (2011). 81

⁴⁷ ROKN (2008). 63.

⁴⁸ ROKN Headquarters. *Republic of Korea Navy* <대한민국 해군> E-book. 80

⁴⁹ This was first seen in the booklet noted in footnote 43

a blue-water navy and the concept that the sea was a significant gateway through which the ROK could enter the developed world. In addition, to this slogan the ROKN produced a new logo (see Figure 6.2), which is designed to demonstrate the role of the ROKN in safeguarding the ROK in the 21st century. It is quite symbolic as it includes a representation of the deck of an aircraft carrier, signalling the desired future direction of the ROKN.⁵⁰ Also the use of English in its logo's suggests both an appreciation of advertising and an acknowledgment that using English often suggests aspiration to the Korean public, thus projecting the image of a modern forward looking force.

VI.IV ENTERING THE POLITICAL ARENA

While the ROKN plays great heed to public-relations and makes a substantial effort to connect the role of ROKN to issues that have public resonance, the true debate on ROK security is held in a non-public environment. Thus in order to cement the concept of a naval identity and secure the future regional role of the navy, it was deemed necessary to explain the nature of the East Asian maritime environment, the role of sea power and the necessity of the ROK to maintain a presence on the world's oceans to security elites. As McDevitt points out the ROK government and higher officials are relative novices in this field and resulting from this need the navy came up with the concept of the shipboard debates.⁵¹ These debates had, as explained by Admiral An who was one of the officers who developed the concept,

'the purpose to persuade the people. In the process of doing our business, we are

⁵⁰ Information retrieved from ROKN website. www.navy.mil.kr

⁵¹ McDevitt, Michael (2007). 6-7 &

faced with some difficulty in the persuasion of the civilian employees in the MND or different kinds of opinion makers, we need people's support. We need some sort of events like the onboard ship conference [sic]'.⁵²

Starting in 1992, these are debates held on ROKN ships for a ROK audience of senior defence officials, politicians, academics, naval officers and graduate students and as such are targeted at the current and future members of the political and security classes. The themes presented in each debate provide an indication of what the ROKN was trying to achieve in terms of power development and the ROKN's place with the ROK's security apparatus and as such the debates are tools for the ROKN to persuade policy and opinion makers of naval needs and future force plans.

The 1992 debate, focusing on the importance of naval development for post-unification scenarios, came at a time when publicly at least unification was a central theme of the government's defence policy, the navy as a forward looking force with long terms planning needs would have had to address such an issue, not only to achieve the necessary funding but primarily to introduce in to the security debate the role of the ROKN in any unification scenario, something which previously would have been under the auspices of the USN. To further this point about the ROKN's use of these debates in 1993 the role of aircraft carriers was the topic, this occurred when the ROKN was beginning an ultimately unsuccessful campaign to purchase such a vessel (although they did receive permission for the construction of a 14,000 ton LPD).⁵³ What is evidenced by this is that they use these debates as the main public platform for putting forward their case for the future of the

⁵² Author Interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae

⁵³ Interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae

ROKN.

The 2002 debate on the use of Jeju Island as a naval base is an example of a further use of these debates. Having confirmed in public the intention to construct a new naval base on the island in 2002 local opposition and political opposition was quite vocal. The intention of using the debate to head off political opposition to an approved plan is an interesting change in direction and suggests the ROKN was aware of the political value of the debates and their utility in promoting the naval argument.

The emphasis of the necessity of the ROKN to pressing security and economic matters is evident in 2007. A focus on EEZ rights addressed what was a contentious political topic at the time when negotiations between Japan and the ROK were at an impasse and encroachment by PRC fishing vessels on ROK fishing grounds in the West Sea was increasingly problematic. As such the navy was showing its importance to an ongoing political, diplomatic and potentially security related situation. It is an example of the ROKN placing itself as central to an issue of national importance that was not exclusively focused on the DPRK and should be seen as an indication of the ROKN's attempt at the time to present itself as being a key independent component of national security in a non-traditional security environment.

The ROKN placed great faith in the success of these discussions and made quite an effort to increase their psychological impact. For example, the first debate was held on board a navy ship which sailed around Dokdo and neighbouring Ulleungdo, with the concept of

emphasising the relationship between the ROKN and ROK sovereignty.⁵⁴ Measuring the success of these debates is more difficult however, anecdotal evidence provided through author interviews suggest that the navy succeeded in getting across its message of the importance of an expanded role for the ROKN in the 21st century.⁵⁵ Additionally it is clear that the shipboard debates have received greater press coverage over time and more recently have been commented upon on Korean blogs and public defence forums.⁵⁶ Success in transmitting their point of view through these debates does not mean however that the ROKN has succeeded in creating a naval or blue-water identity within the defence establishment, these seminars have to be seen as part of an overall effort to develop the beginnings of a naval consciousness within the corridors of power.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Evidence comes from search on www.naver.co.kr (the primary Korean search engine) based on the number of hits for each year's topic.

| YEAR | SEMINAR TOPIC |
|------|---|
| 1992 | 1 st Shipboard Debate <i>'Naval Development and a Unified Korea'</i> |
| 1993 | 2 nd Shipboard Debate <i>'The Importance of Aircraft Carriers and Future Reunification'</i> |
| 1994 | 3 rd Shipboard Debate <i>'The Direction of 21st Century Korean Maritime Security'</i> |
| 1995 | 4 th Shipboard Debate <i>'The New Maritime Order and the 21st Century Mission of the Korean Navy'</i> |
| 1996 | 5 th Shipboard Debate <i>'Sea power and the National Economy'</i> |
| 1997 | 6 th Shipboard Debate <i>'The New Maritime Order and the Navy's Course'</i> |
| 2000 | 8 th Shipboard Debate <i>'Revaluating Chang, Bo-go in the 21st Century Maritime Era'</i> |
| 2002 | 9 th Shipboard Debate <i>'Jeju Island and Maritime Security'</i> |
| 2004 | 10 th Shipboard Debate <i>'21st Century Strategic and Environmental Challenges for the Korean Navy'</i> |
| 2006 | 11 th Shipboard Debate <i>'South Korea's Defence Reform 2020 and Maritime Security'</i> |
| 2007 | 12 th Shipboard Debate <i>'Measures to Respond to Neighbouring Countries EEZ Expansion Policies'</i> |
| 2009 | 13 th Shipboard Debate <i>'Admiral Son, Won-il's founding thoughts on the Korean Navy & the Development of ROKN Naval Power'</i> |
| 2011 | 14 th Shipboard Debate <i>'Changes to the Northeast Asian Maritime Security Environment & the Challenge for the Korean Navy'</i> |

Table 6.2: List of Shipboard Debates

While the shipboard debates were a direct naval initiative designed to forward their own thinking to a narrow platform, a wider debate on naval thinking had been developing since the early 1980's, a debate the ROKN would take full advantage of. Writing in 1989 Edward Olsen stated that there had been a *'major- - if diffuse effort to expand the horizons of naval thinking in South Korea'*, in his paper he goes on to describe the development of naval thinking over the 1980's, and how issues including SLOC protection, the future of Northeast Asian security and an increased naval role given a possible future reduction in US interests in the region had stimulated the productions of papers by both serving naval officers and also by a diverse group of academics.⁵⁷ This signalled the beginning of a small number of research institutes which focus was on the maritime environment and the future path of the

⁵⁷ See Olsen, Edward A. (1989)

Korean navy. An important aspect of this development was and is the close relationship the ROKN has with these institutes. Major areas of cooperation include joint seminars (including the onboard debates mentioned later in this chapter) the production of papers and the joint promotion of issues related to naval matters. A significant point is that retired naval officers play a key role in these institutes, something that has added benefit in Korean culture where a great deal of value is placed in the Confucius ideals of respecting and listening to the opinions of elder or senior people. Thus these institutes also play a powerful lobbying role within the government and in the national media something that is evident in the recent military reform debate which threatens to potentially downgrade the Navy's and Air Force's influence within the senior command structure.⁵⁸

A lot of the initial work on developing naval thought in public sphere was performed by the SLOC Study Group-Korea, founded in 1981 and based at Yonsei University in Seoul; it consisted of a mix of academics, officials and business men who looked at the importance of SLOC to the ROK and the issues which surround their protection.⁵⁹ They published a number of works outlined by Olsen as focusing on the nature of SLOC and the possible developmental direction the ROKN should take in order to protect them.⁶⁰ This group also initiated the International Sea power Symposium Series which is conducted jointly with the ROKN and latterly with other research institutes. Additionally, the group published in both English and Korean the proceedings of conferences specifically aimed at a wide range of maritime and naval topics. Whilst seemingly defunct for a number of years they have now

⁵⁸ The role of retired senior military officers can be seen in the reaction to their lobbying by the political elites. See '*Renewed Calls by Minister for Reforms in the Military*' Korea JoongAn Daily (01/06/2011) & '*With Reforms it's Blue House Versus the Generals*' Korea JoongAn Daily (30/03/2011)

⁵⁹ Information from SLOC Study Group-Korea website: www.sloc.co.kr (retrieved 15/11/11) in Korean

⁶⁰ Olsen (1989). 11-12

been reformed and now once again jointly sponsor conferences and seem to be producing more publications. The significance of this is that as early as 1981, the concepts of a greater maritime and naval role for the ROK was being discussed and whilst this in the grander scheme of ROK defence may seem minor it should be viewed as a beginning for greater thought regarding the relationship of the ROK and the sea.

Perhaps a more influential institute was founded in 1997, called the Korean Institute for Maritime Strategy (KIMS); ostensibly it is a research institute with a substantial role in lobbying and promoting naval matters.⁶¹ Composed of academics, policy makers and retired naval officers, its main function is to promote a greater understanding of maritime matters and the importance of the sea to ROK security. While working closely with the ROKN in organising conferences often in conjunction with other maritime groups, it also gives frequent lectures to undergraduate and graduate students on maritime and security issues. Also, importantly it publishes a considerable number of books both indigenously written and also Korean translations of major works on naval history and strategy including Corbett, Kennedy and Till. These are available for sale to the public and indicate a serious attempt to create a wider understanding of naval issues. What is also important to note is a growing number of Korean authors on the subject, who deal with issues such as Korean maritime and naval history, naval strategy, law of the sea and the East Asian security environment. In addition KIMS publishes a monthly peer reviewed journal which covers a diverse range of topics including Asian maritime security, WMD, the DPRK threat, EEZ and boundary issues, SLOC security and limited amount on the development of the ROKN. The journal is at times

⁶¹ Information from Korea Institute for Maritime Strategy Website www.kims.or.kr & information gained from authors visit to the institute in April 2011

topical, devoting an entire issue to the effects of the terrorist attack on September 11th and another issue to the effects of the sinking of the ROKN *Cheonan*.⁶²

Linking the two organisations is an event called the International Sea Power Symposium, which held its first meeting in 1989 under the auspices of the SLOC Study Group and ROKN, more recently they have been held jointly with the ROKN, SLOC Study Group and KIMS. The subjects, as with the shipboard conferences, indicate to a degree the thinking and concerns of these groups, however these symposia are international in nature being presented in both Korean and English and are aimed at a wider audience. Therefore, they are indicative of the message the ROKN and the naval establishment is trying to put forward to both the defence community in the ROK and internationally.

The earlier symposia are typical in their focus on justifications for naval expansion and the future of the ROK within the East Asian region. For example the arguments presented in 1995 surrounding globalisation, sea power and the ROK marry with not only the thinking of the then Kim, Young-sam government but also contain many of the justifications provided to him by both the Navy and his advisors when he was approving the creation of a blue water fleet.⁶³ While some of the later ones notably in 2001 and 2005 deal with much wider concepts of East Asian maritime security, maritime confidence building measures (MCBM) and the overall impact of UNCLOS II on maritime boundaries. This is evidence of a greater confidence in ROKN development and the role of the ROK in the maritime environment. Finally, in 2010 the topics were once again more focused on the development of the ROKN

⁶² Survey conducted by author of KIMS journal 'Strategy 21' from Volume 1 (Summer 1998) to Volume 14 (Summer 2011).

⁶³ Interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae (April 2011)

coming after the sinking of the ROKNS *Cheonan*, this reflects the vulnerability the ROKN was feeling about its blue-water future and its position within the ROK security structure following the attack.⁶⁴

| DATE | NAME/HOST | TOPIC DISCUSSED |
|------|---|---|
| 1989 | The Pacific Era and Korean Sea Power ROKN SLOC STUDY GROUP | Pacific Era/Korean Maritime Security/Korean Sea Power: Evaluation and Future Direction/Sea Power and Technology |
| 1991 | The Japanese Invasion in 1592 & Sea Power ROKN SLOC STUDY GROUP | The Japanese Invasion/ A Revaluation of the Strategy and Tactics of the Participants/The Contemporary 16 th Century Technology of the Sea/ Adm. Yi, Sun-shin |
| 1993 | Sea Power and Korea in the 21 st Century ROKN SLOC STUDY GROUP | Maritime Security in the Asia-Pacific Region/The Regional Powers Naval Strategy/The Future Prospects of Korean Sea Power/Sea power and Technological Development |
| 1995 | Korean's Sea Power and National Development in the Era of Globalisation ROKN SLOC STUDY GROUP | Sea Power in the Era of Globalisation/Sea Power and National Development/Regional Powers Naval Development/The Future of the ROK Navy |
| 1997 | New Ocean Era and Maritime Development ROKN SLOC STUDY GROUP | The Security Situation and Maritime Strategy in the Asia-Pacific/Maritime Disputes & EEZ/Multi-National Cooperation in Asia Pacific/Dynamics between Naval Power and Naval Capabilities |
| 1999 | Maritime Security and the Role of East Asian Navies in the 21 st Century ROKN SLOC STUDY GROUP | Sea Power and National Economy/East Asian Maritime Security in the 21 st Century/International Security & East Asian Naval Power |
| 2001 | Issues and Prospects of Maritime Security for the 21 st Century in East Asia ROKN SLOC STUDY GROUP | Security Environment Changes in East Asia and Regional Security Cooperation/Issues and Prospects for Maritime Cooperation in East Asia/Naval Cooperation and Confidence Building Measures in East Asia/Regional Security Measures |

⁶⁴ Information retrieved from the Korean Institute for Maritime Strategy website. www.kims.or.kr (retrieved on 04/09/2011)

| | | |
|------|--|---|
| 2003 | The Role of the Navy in Countering New Security Threats ROKN SLOC Study Group | Maritime Security in the 21 st Century/New Security Threats and Maritime Issues/Naval Policy in the Asia Pacific Region/The Mission of the ROKN and New Security Threats |
| 2005 | Changes in Maritime (sic) Strategic Environment in East Asia and Proposals for Promoting Regional Security ROKN KIMS SLOC STUDY GROUP | National Defence Policy and Maritime Security of East Asian Countries/Maritime Security in East Asia: Issues and Challenges |
| 2010 | The Security Environment of the Korean Peninsula and the Direction for Development for ROK Navy (sic) ROKN KIMS SLOC STUDY GROUP | Evaluation of Emerging Threats and Responses/North Korea's Unprovoked Attack and Korea's Maritime Strategy/North Korea's Threat and Direction of Development for the ROK Navy |

TABLE 6.3: List of International Sea Power Symposia: This table is in part drawn from the work of Commander Cho, Young-jo and the details from the seminars between 1989 and 2001 are taken from his unpublished thesis '*The Naval Policy of the Republic of Korea: From the Beginning to the 21st Century*' (University of Hull, 2003). All other information has been obtained by the author.

A number of points can be drawn for examining the institutes mentioned above, the first being that there has been a concerted effort by research institutions and lobbying groups to promote the concept of sea power within the ROK. This was supported and in some cases driven by the ROKN who saw the need for greater explanation to both the public and the government of the concepts and importance of sea power development. The timing of their creation suggests that despite the approval for blue-water construction by Kim, young-sam in 1995, there was recognition of the need to continue to develop the ROK's naval identity in what is a competitive and changing domestic defence environment.⁶⁵

⁶⁵ With the exception of the SLOC study group, the three main naval lobbying groups/institutes were founded after the time of Kim, Young-sam's decision to build a blue-water navy. The SLOC Study Group was founded in 1981, the Korean Institute for Maritime Strategy in 1997, whilst two other organisations dedicated to the same ideals of promoting blue-water construction and to the development of a maritime oriented ROK, the Sea

What can be drawn from this is the continuing need to educate policy makers about these concepts and thus stating that a naval or even maritime identity has been created would be going too far, rather it would be more accurate to say the ROKN and other groups have succeeded in the short term of reaching their goals but as will be shown in the final section this achievement is tenuous and by no means has a naval identity been firmly placed within the ROK security consciousness.

VI.V CONCLUSION: THE CHALLENGES AND FAILURES

The efforts to create a naval identity within both elite and public circles demonstrate that the ROKN is attempting to ensure long-lasting force development, both in terms of independent operational capability and regional operations. Decades of army dominance, not only of the defence forces but of political power during the foundation years of the ROK left the ROKN in a relatively weak position to develop as an independent, equal entity. The paradigm that focused on state security from Communist aggression and by necessity promoted land power and a strong army resulted in not only ROKA domination in terms of spending and strategic thought but also a lack of understanding in the public and policy arenas of the importance of naval power to what is essentially an island. Overcoming this insular focus, despite the ROK relying on the sea for its economic and material survival, has been and remains one of the most challenging areas for the ROKN.

The advent of democracy, the resultant reduction in the power of the ROKA and the widening of the ROK's security perceptions allowed the ROKN to make its case for development both to the political elites and the general public. What has occurred since has been a multi-track approach to inculcating a naval identity in the consciousness of the body politic and political elites. The importance of this should not be underestimated, the long term nature of naval force development, the large amounts of capital expenditure required and the shifting sands of peninsular security means that the ROKN is required to develop its own position within the ROK, its defence establishment and political circles.

While the use of historical figures is a classic method to allow the public to gain a sense of a naval identity and the importance of naval power, the activities of the ROKN to persuade the people of their missions through various publicity events and a multitude of media are equally important. Politically the dual approach of holding ROKN led shipboard debates and the private although navy sponsored events run by research institutes are aimed at persuading politicians and civil servants who have been traditionally focused on the ROKA and the confines of peninsular security to provide funding and support to ROKN force development. Thus the creation of a naval identity within the ROK has been a key element in persuading successive governments of the need for naval development and an expansion of naval capabilities.

The success of these efforts is difficult to judge, clearly by persuading three governments of the need for naval development a degree of success has occurred but the creation of a natural identity with such potent threat extant to the north makes such a project extremely

long term. As such, the sinking of the *Cheonan* in March 2010 and the action of the ROKN in rescuing the Korean Tanker *Samho Jewelry* off the coast of Somalia in January 2011 provide some evidence into to both the ROKN's successes and failures in the creation of a naval identity.

The sinking of the *Cheonan* clearly had a significant impact on the ROKN's public reputation and its future developmental direction. However, the shift away from blue water construction should not be seen as a direct result of the sinking but rather as a consequence of the policies of Lee, Myung-bak who as will be shown in the following chapter came into office with a focus on reorienting security back towards North Korea and it was that in combination with budgetary restrictions and only subsequently the sinking, that presented difficulties for the ROKN.⁶⁶ Thus what this period has shown is that the establishment of a naval identity is an extremely long term project, with the vagaries of peninsular security and proclivities of each new president significantly influencing the ROK's force development direction.

Within the public sphere there had been calls from the media in the months following the sinking for the ROKN to look towards the DPRK rather than regional operations. The public reaction was one of anger and confusion. Polls show a lack of trust regarding the military's account of what happened and there is a lack of understanding of how the situation was handled and why the ROKN did not detect a DPRK submarine.^{67 68} A contrast can be seen in

⁶⁶ Lee, Sang-ho (2010) *Issue of Oceanic Navy and Complement of Naval Force after Warship Cheonan-ham Incident*. Sejong Commentary No. 181 (April 29, 2010) Seoul: The Sejong Institute

⁶⁷ 'Public's faith in military authorities shaken after Cheonan sinking' The Hankyoreh (12/04/2010)

⁶⁸ Interview with Admiral An, Byeong-tae

the reaction following the 1st and 2nd Battles of Yeonpyeong where the public perception of the ROKN was one of a force working well to protect the ROK from the north. As has been shown this was to some extent exploited by the ROKN who honoured the fallen sailors of those battles with the naming of the first ships of a new class of patrol boat after them. Indeed the *Samho Jewelry* rescue went some way to reviving the reputation of the ROKN with the Korean public but seems to have had little effect on the defence elites in terms of blue water operations. One editorial confirmed the perceptual dilemma the ROKN faces, while acknowledging the importance of a global presence it calls for the defence of the ROK to take priority.⁶⁹

Perhaps the effect of the *Cheonan* can be seen in a more figurative sense with the removal of the motto 'To the Sea To the World' which was briefly replaced by 'The ROK Navy Promises a Bright Future', although there is evidence in 2012 the ROKN is reviving its former slogan now that the public and political reaction to the sinking has died down. This is indicative of the consequences of the *Cheonan* with the previous motto being deemed inappropriate in the political circumstance. The ROKN has taken the first steps into creating a naval identity but the nature of the political system combined with the strategic circumstances has put this advance into significant jeopardy. What this chapter has demonstrated is the major task the ROKN and the naval community has in creating a naval identity something that has been relatively successful but should be seen as both a work in progress and a key element in developing the ROKN into a regional force over the long term.

⁶⁹ Editorial: 'Naval Build-up' The Korea Times (06/07/2011)

CHAPTER 7

POLITICS AND NAVAL MODERNISATION

VII.I INTRODUCTION

As the ROKN has attempted to make the transition from a coastal navy to one with regional and even global capabilities, the arguments put forward as to why this has occurred have focused on regional arms procurement competition and a resultant strategic suspicion, the growing importance of SLOC protection and the economic advantages to developing a naval arms industry. This narrow focus has limited the discussion on other drivers of such development and as this chapter demonstrates, the transition to a democratic form of government combined with a political will to increase the ROK's international presence has been crucial in allowing ROKN development to occur.

Drawing on the work of Heginbotham regarding the linkages between democratic governments and naval expansion, the chapter links the ascension of Kim, Young-sam to the presidency with the redrawing of the civil-military landscape which allowed not only a more advanced foreign policy to develop but also provided the ROKN with a more equal footing within the security institutions of the ROK.⁷⁰ With this relative equality established, the ROKN was free to propose the construction of a navy that was not only a maritime defensive

⁷⁰ See Heginbotham, E. (2002) "The Fall and Rise of Navies in East Asia: Military Organisations, Domestic Politics and Grand Strategy", *International Security* Vol.27(2), 86-125.

adjunct to the ROKA against the threat of a DPRK assault but also one which would be able to service the government's policies regarding repositioning the ROK's place within the regional and world order.

It is these policies under successive governments which allowed the ROKN to develop as the ROK's security identity began to change from that of an inward to an outward looking state. However, the imperial style presidential system in the ROK has placed limits on the ambition of the ROKN as it is dependent on political support to expand its role beyond that of conventional deterrence.

This chapter is divided chronologically into four parts. The first examines the administration of Kim, Young-sam who came into government as the first non-military elected leader of modern times. It examines the importance of his de-politicization and reorganisation of the military structures within the ROK and how these allowed the ROKN to gain greater traction for its blue water plan. Additionally, it demonstrates how the defence and foreign policies of the ROK were altered to look away from but not ignore the threat of the DPRK and how this matched the vision for a transformed naval force.

The following two sections examine the administrations of Kim, Dae-jung and Roh, Moo-hyun, both of which followed a more lenient course in dealing with the DPRK and pushed the ROK toward political and economic interaction on a regional level and emphasised the ROK's independence in foreign and security matters. These policies profoundly affected the ROKN, as within the defence establishment it was the navy that was best placed to develop

within a regional context. As a result the policies of both administrations allowed the ROKN to secure funding and in part meet its goal of a regional operational capability. The third section looks at President Lee-Myung-bak before the sinking of the ROKN ship *Cheonan* and how his government's foreign policy goals of internationalising the ROK to an even greater extent through heightened global commitments on all levels led to the ROKN meeting its regional aspirations by taking part in the counter-piracy mission in the Gulf of Aden. However, this chapter also demonstrates how the defence policies of this administration limited further ROKN development as the government sought to refocus the military back towards its traditional role of deterrence.

Finally, the chapter looks at the political situation following the sinking of the ROKN ship *Cheonan* by the DPRK. By examining this it confirms that political will is necessary for ROKN regional aspirations and demonstrates the danger such a project faces when the administration reacts to events and changes the fundamental goals and structures created over previous governments.

By making use of author conducted interviews and sources either unavailable or unused by other commentators on the subject this chapter offers a fresh perspective on ROKN development, demonstrating that democratisation laid the foundations for ROKN expansion and that subsequent civilian government's expanded foreign policies have allowed the ROKN to create the bedrock of a regional force.

VII.II KIM, YOUNG-SAM (1993-98): DE-POLITICISATION AND A NEW DIRECTION

The ascension of President Kim, Young-sam to power in 1993 heralded a sea-change in ROK politics. As the first elected civilian leader since 1962, he came to power with an agenda to transform the social, economic, political and military structures of a country that had been dominated by successive security-centric military lead governments over the previous 30 years. Within this context, the ROK military would undergo a dramatic de-politicisation and internal restructuring, with the end result of it losing its political power and overall dominance of the defence and security institutions that it had held since the end of the Korean War.

The military and centrally the ROKA while a significant force after the Korean War consolidated its power with the coup of 1962, in which then General Park, Chung-hee effectively took power from the civilian led Second Republic Government of Chang Myon. As a result of this coup Park resigned from the army, ran and won election as president in 1963. What followed was the strengthening of the army's role not only in the political process but also in the administration of the ROK Government. Many of President Park's fellow officers also resigned from the army and were inserted into various government agencies and departments, solidifying the army's influence in all aspects government. A significant by-product of this was that despite the military having constitutionally enforced neutrality, they held in effect a controlling interest within the ROK government. This interest was further strengthened as graduates of the Korean Military Academy the ROKA's primary officer

training school, would upon retirement be offered positions within government.⁷¹

What followed was a series of quasi-civilian governments supported by both active and retired officers strategically placed in all aspects of the bureaucracy, state sector and private sector enterprises.⁷² The effect this military and specifically army domination had on foreign and defence affairs was profound. Graduates of the Korean Military Academy tightly controlled access to the inner circle of power in successive regimes and their security policy reflected an inherent conservative anti-communist ideology, one in which the security of the regime, the state and the nation were paramount.⁷³ This domination resulted in a rather narrow strategic view within the MND and the military apparatus as a whole. The focus on the threat from the DPRK, which was primarily a land based one, in combination with the ROKA dominated higher echelons of command and a US preference towards land force development resulted in a marginalisation of both the Air Force and the Navy in relation to policy decisions and their subordination to the ROKA in terms of procurement priorities and strategic thought. This resulted, for the ROKN at least, in a limitation of strategic development and an unfocused wider maritime policy in terms of the uses of the sea and the place of the ROKN within the regional and global maritime environment.⁷⁴

The Kim, Young-sam reform process of the military was based on three goals, Firstly remove the political influence of the military, Secondly, gain and cement civilian control over the

⁷¹ Saxer, C. J. (2004) Generals and Presidents: Establishing Civilian and Democratic Control in South Korea. *Armed Forces & Society*. 30 (3). 383-408. 386

⁷² Croissant, A. (2004). Riding the Tiger: Civilian Control and the Military in Democratizing Korea. *Armed Forces & Society*, 30 (3), 357-381. 365-376

⁷³ Ibid. 368

⁷⁴ Bae, S-Y. (1994). Maritime Developments in South Korea. *Maritime Power in the China Seas Capabilities and Rational* (pp. 51-60). Canberra: Australian Defence Studies Centre. 54

state's defence and security apparatus and third, eliminate corruption within the upper echelons of the military's command structure. In order to achieve such goals he undertook a number of initiatives.

- 1) He named as Defence Minister a two star general and as deputy Defence minister a civilian from the ministry of finance. These positions were normally held by senior 4 star generals. He also increased civilian control over strategic departments such as the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Trade and the Ministry for Unification and appointed civilians to the posts of National Security Advisor and the Director of the Agency for National Security Planning.⁷⁵
- 2) He replaced the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff with an Air Force Officer, the first time a non-army officer had held such a position.⁷⁶
- 3) Significantly, he set out to abolish the *Hanahoe*, a secret faction of Korean Military Academy Graduates who held the most powerful positions in the Army and the MND. They played an instrumental role in assisting both Park, Chung-hee and his virtual "successor" Chun, Doo-hwan in gaining power and were seen to be at the centre of army political interference. He did this through the promotion of ROTC trained officers and officers who had no connection with the *Hanahoe*. He also announced active discrimination against all existing *Hanahoe* members through limiting their promotional opportunities.⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Karniol, R (1993) Analysis: Democratic Change Reaches ROK Military. *Jane's Defence Weekly* 020:003
Downloaded from www.janes.com (04/11/2010)

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Saxer (2004). 395

- 4) The Defense Security Command (The ROKA's counter-intelligence service) which had been instrumental in monitoring political opposition, ensuring regime security and was central to the installation of its head Chun, Doo-hwan as President, was reorganised and placed under civilian control, it also no longer reported directly to the President but to the Minister of National Defense.⁷⁸
- 5) Corruption on a large scale was discovered in two areas. The first being the paying of bribes for promotions and the second being corruption in the arms procurement process. Importantly, this issue was found to cross all three services, with the ROKN's Chief of Naval Operations and eight other flag officers being implicated. As a result, the post of CNO was given to a two star admiral, Kim, Hong-yeul. This forced the retirement of a further seven flag officers who as a result were bi-passed for promotion and put in place a younger generation of senior officers.⁷⁹

This campaign of reform had a number of wider effects within ROK society. The military was effectively removed from the political sphere as evidenced by the arrest, trial and punishment of the two previous presidents; Roh, Tae-woo and Chun, Doo-hwan (both former ROKA generals) and a number of their close aids including 13 senior officers on charges of rebellion, conspiracy and corruption.⁸⁰ In addition, the imbalance within the defence establishment between the army, air-force and navy was somewhat rectified as the two smaller services gained in influence.⁸¹ In relation to overall policy making, the

⁷⁸ Ibid. 393

⁷⁹ Karniol (1993) & Saxer (2004). 393-395

⁸⁰ Croissant (2004). 373

⁸¹ It is this author's opinion that a natural imbalance will always exist to some extent as the size and importance of the ROKA in comparison with the ROKN and ROKAF means that they will always hold the majority of senior positions. This is shown in that after the appointment of General Lee, Yang-ho (ROKAF) as the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff all subsequent chairmen have been drawn from the army. However a

civilianisation of the defence and foreign affairs related ministries resulted in an increase in cross-departmental working groups and a decrease in the over-arching power and influence of the MND.⁸²

The Kim, Young-sam reforms, had a resultant impact on the ROKN. As mentioned above a number of senior officers were relieved of duty being replaced by relatively junior but non-political ones, however more significantly, the reforms allowed the Navy to develop and implement an overall maritime strategy, one which maintained a focus on the DPRK threat but was also independent of the army and which addressed the weaknesses in the extant force structure and operational thinking.

While, it is important to note that the development of new platforms began before the election of Kim, Young-sam. The previous president Roh, Tae-woo oversaw three major platform acquisitions: the KDX-I destroyer, the Type 209 submarines and P-3C patrol aircraft (Work began on the KDX-I in 1989 and the Type 209 submarines were ordered in 1987) while upgrades were performed on a number of existing vessels.⁸³ ⁸⁴ The purchase of these platforms did not truly reflect a change in the operational focus of the ROKN, but were in part a reaction to the proposed reduction of American forces under the Nunn-Warner amendment and the resultant perception within the ROK that the US may not be willing to

significant point is that following Kim, Young-sam's reforms, the influence of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) as cross service organisation increased.

⁸² It is important to note that as Croissant (2004) points out, that despite these reforms, the military is still highly influential within the security apparatus of the ROK state. She attributes this to a lack of civilian experts and institutional habits. Croissant (2004). 372

⁸³ Cha, V. D. (2001) Strategic Culture and the Military Modernisation of South Korea. *Armed Forces & Society* 28:1. 99-127. 102 & Effecting a Shift in Strategy. *Jane's Defence Weekly*. 022/018 (5th Nov 1994). Downloaded from www.janes.com (10/12/2009).

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

support the country in a time of emergency and in part a response to the developing power of the KPN. Thus the ROKN despite receiving some significant upgrades in capability retained its operational focus on the DPRK. As such naval power remained as an adjunct to the defensive capabilities of the ROKA.⁸⁵

This was to change when the Kim government promulgated a policy of Globalisation (*Segyehwa*), announced in the 'Sydney Declaration' in 1994, it called for a large scale societal embrace of internationalism in order to meet the challenges posed by the economic and social integration that was beginning within the international order.⁸⁶ Best described by Kim as the ROK's attempt to recast its national identity as a "*newly industrialized and democratized country deserving membership in the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations Security Council*", it was based on the concept that the ROK needed to move away from its traditional cultural, economic and political norms and embrace international norms on all levels in order for the ROK to become an advanced nation and not be dominated as Korea was in the early 20th century.⁸⁷

⁸⁸ While not a total success under the Kim government it did lay the bedrock for further attempts at internationalisation under subsequent administrations and it presents an insight in to the changes that the Kim government had in mind when examining the ROK's defence policies. Indeed, Kim's approval of a regional role for the ROKN was driven by the perception that a force capable of operating on a regional basis was an important element in the

⁸⁵ Moon, C-I & Lee, J-Y (2008), "The Revolution in Military Affairs and the Defence Industry in South Korea" In *Security Challenges* Vol. 4 (4) (117-134). 121

⁸⁶ Shin, G-W (2003) "*The Paradox of Korean Globalization*". Stanford: The Asia-Pacific Research Centre. P.10 Retrieved from <http://iis-db.stanford.edu> (30/07/2011)

⁸⁷ Kim, S. (2007) "Nationalism and Globalisation on South Korea's Foreign Policy" In. *New Asia* Vol.14 (3) 17-18

⁸⁸ Kim, S. S. (2000) *Korean and Globalization (Segyehwa): A Framework for Analysis* In. Kim, S. S (ed.) *Korea's Globalization*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. 3

implementation of *Segyehwa* suggesting that naval power was seen within this administration as an expression of national status and for an ROK who was moving out in to the world after decades of peninsular focus possessing a navy comparable to national power was crucial.⁸⁹

This commitment was demonstrated in 1995 with the promotion of Admiral An, Byeong-tae to the post of CNO. In the face of significant opposition within the MND, he presented President Kim with his plan to transform the ROKN into a blue-water force.⁹⁰ Following a 15 minute meeting with President Kim, the plan was approved.⁹¹ ⁹² Despite continued resistance from the Minister of Defence who was a former ROKAF general, Kim Young-sam in consultation with the ROKN made his blue-water speech at the Naval Academy (as described in Chapter Six) after which dissent against the plan reduced. This leads to the conclusion that the alteration of the power structures within the ROK government and military in combination with a new policy direction for the ROK allowed the ROKN to develop its regional capabilities and serves to emphasise the power of the ROK president. Naval modernisation in terms of wider operational capabilities would not have been possible without a civilian president who saw it as a match for his own foreign policies. This is a key lesson and one which is highlighted in successive presidencies.

⁸⁹ Author conducted interview with Representative Park, Jin (Kim, Young-sam's Press Secretary).

⁹⁰ The exact details of the report are currently classified; however Adm. An provided details in an interview conducted with the Author in April 2011.

⁹¹ Interview with Adm. An (April 2011).

⁹² The nature of the ROK governance was that of an imperial style presidency resulting in at that time little or no oversight or the ability for the bureaucracy to amend decisions made by the office. See Jung, Yong-duck (1997) "Administrative Reorganisation: The case of the Kim, Young-sam Regime, In. Cho, Yong-Ho & Frederickson, George H. *The White house and the Blue House: Government Reform in the United States and Korea*, Maryland: United Press of America (89-110) 91-95

Both the drive for globalisation and the plan for ROKN reform were reflected in the 1994-95 Defence White paper which broke from the pattern of previous white papers. While maintaining the defensive focus on the DPRK it also stated the need to look past conventional deterrence and move toward a strategy of comprehensive security.⁹³ This was recognition of the fact that both globally and regionally the security outlook was changing due to the end of the cold war. In speeches made at the Korean Naval Academy by the President during his tenure, the ROKN's role within this new security environment was made clearer with linkages made between naval power, globalisation and economic development.⁹⁴ This demonstrated an acknowledgement of the importance of the sea to the ROK's economy and the need for the ROK to have an ability to protect its own interests in an area that was growing in importance with the end of the Cold War and the development the region as a whole was undergoing. Something that was reflected in official ROK defence policy for the first time in the 1994-1995 Defense White Paper which stated,

*'Following the global trend [sic] and the changing strategic environment around the Korean peninsula...the navy will grow into a regional navy through the balanced improvement of surface-underwater-air capabilities and the acquisition of a strike capability.'*⁹⁵

Moving away from the traditional operational construct of solely operating to respond to threats posed by the DPRK, the ROKN would now aim towards having the ability to operate

⁹³ This was reflected in the re-writing of ROK's Defence Objectives. They were altered in 1994 to show the need to replace the defensive focus on the DPRK with a comprehensive security posture.

⁹⁴ President Kim, Young-sam (1995) At the 49th Commencement of the Korean Naval Academy. Retrieved from Korean Presidential Archive http://www.pa.go.kr/online_contents/speech/speech02/1308100_4248.html & President Kim, Young-sam (1996) The Sea at the Forefront of Nation building: At the 50th Commencement Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy. Retrieved from Korean Presidential Archive http://www.pa.go.kr/online_contents/speech/02/1308234_4248.html & President Kim, Young-sam (2007) At the 51st Commencement of the Korean Naval Academy. Retrieved from http://www.pa.go.kr/online_contents/speech/speech02/1308399_4248.html

⁹⁵ ROK MND (1995). Defense White Paper 1994-1995. Seoul: Korea Institute of Defense Analysis. 106

in the future strategic environment to further the ROK's growing international interests and desired global footprint.

Democratic and administrative reforms were central to ROKN development as they allowed the Navy to present its plan despite the opposition of officials within the MND and a president without influence or ROKA bias accepted it. The long term nature of naval transformation means that once the foundation for such development is laid as in this case, further political support from future leaders is required to carry it through. In this sense the Kim, Young-sam government provided the initial impetus for ROKN reform through its efforts to alter the ROK's internal conception of its place in the world and through the reforms it carried out in bringing the military under civilian control, but it would require others to advance ROKN development further. In this vein this administration also provides a key lesson, Kim supported ROKN reform because it matched a central foreign policy objective that of *Segyehwa*, the future of ROKN ambitions would too depend on their goals matching those of successive leaders.

VII.III KIM, DAE-JUNG (1998-2003): CONCEPTUAL AND CONCRETE DEVELOPMENT

Kim, Dae-jung's election victory in 1998 was a significant milestone in ROK politics. Arrested and forced into exile by previous governments, He was the first member of the opposition party to hold the highest political office, his election not only consolidated the ROK's move toward a fully representative democracy, but also signified an extended and more involved

ROK foreign policy, a recognition of the need to reform the military and the country's defence policy in order to meet future needs and assist South Korea in becoming a normalised industrial nation and finally, a fundamental shift in attitude towards DRPK; A shift that would move away from containment and focus on engagement.

This shift in policy towards the DRPK was known as the "Sunshine Policy". It was aimed at breaking what the Kim government believed to be an unsuccessful and unproductive policy of containment. Long term engagement through economic incentives and political reciprocity backed by what was described during the administration as a 'firm defence posture' was central to the new policy. Founded on what could be described as an increasing confidence in its superiority, the South repeatedly pronounced that it would not strive to undermine or absorb the DPRK which was a significant step in allaying DPRK fears. The culmination of the Sunshine Policy can be seen in the 2000 summit between the ROK and DPRK heads of state, which although lacking in security and military agreements, contained economic development initiatives and a tacit if not direct acceptance of each other's legitimacy. This was the flagship policy of the Kim, Dae-jung government and set the tone of the internal and international policy debate regarding DPRK relations for the next two administrations. While not having a huge impact on overall defence posture during this administration it is indicative of its reformist attitude and willingness to attempt new untried policy initiatives.⁹⁶ This change in posture should not be underestimated; it was the largest shift in ROK policy towards the North since the Korean War and was the polar opposite of his predecessors however the impact of this policy on the ROKN was not as significant as may

⁹⁶ See: Kim, S. S. (2006) *The Two Koreas and the Great Powers*. New York: Cambridge University Press. 320-321

be imagined. Two clashes occurred along the NLL during Kim, Dae-jung's presidency and while, as will be shown he was large supporter of ROKN blue water development, the ROKN's operational focus remained northward.

Unlike the Sunshine Policy, the government's foreign policy drew on that of his predecessor and was predicated on the acceptance of the realities of globalisation, the recognition that the ROK needed to develop as a medium power within both global and regional environments in terms of economic and political capability and that a stable Northeast Asian region was central not only to economic development but also to the growth of a more cooperative rather than confrontational DPRK relationship.⁹⁷ While the administration's policy towards the DPRK was a radical departure compared to all previous ROK governments, his concept of international normalisation can be seen in part as an extension of the policies of the previous government with an added emphasis on the ROK's role within the region.

There was an internal acknowledgment that such a shift would require an alteration in the mindset of both the ROK population and its ruling classes. They would have to adjust their cold-war mentality of the centrality of security against the DPRK and forgo the policy stability provided by the fundamental opposition to Communism and the reliance on the US to set their foreign policy agenda. And in its place accept that the ROK would have to operate within the international community both politically and economically and accept the consequences such as trading within the open market, and the need to contribute to international initiatives in the areas of peacekeeping operations, the promotion of global

⁹⁷ Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Hang, Soon-young (1998) *Foreign Policy Agenda of the Republic of Korea in the New Century*. Speech given at the Graduate School of International Studies: Korea University (11/12/1998). Accessed from www.mofat.go.kr (01/03/2010)

democracy and human rights and the provision of aid and assistance to less developed countries.^{98 99} These aims were an extension of the spirit of *Segyehwa*, embracing the concept of opening the ROK to the region and the world and as such should be seen as part of an overall and politically developed movement to alter the identity of the ROK in terms of its international relations.

Indeed regionalism was key element to Kim, Dae-jung's foreign policy and was operated under the belief that regional stability and economic integration were fundamental conditions for Korean unification. His policy of regionalism somewhat recast the ROK's concept of its own security, introducing the idea that no longer would the ROK be forced to respond to the wishes of the larger powers but instead would seek to drive and influence the regional agenda but placing the ROK at its centre. This was to be achieved through greater use of regional multi-lateral institutions and an emphasis on bi-lateral exchanges particularly with Japan and the PRC. This newly created regional agenda for the ROK did not really succeed as internal difficulties and the realities of foreign relations began to dictate how this most idealistic of President could act in the second half of his term.¹⁰⁰ Regionalism like the Sunshine policy was major change for the ROK and while it was not in any form an independent defence policy vis-à-vis the U.S. it did provide an ideological bedrock for the ROKN to have its modernisation approved. Under Kim, Dae-jung the military would play a role in the ROK's regional policies as for the ROK to be central to regional interactions it

⁹⁸ Ibid.

⁹⁹ Snyder, S. (2008) Strategic Thought Toward Asia in the Kim, Dae-jung Era. In Rozman, Hyun & Lee (Ed) *ROK Strategic Thought Toward Asia* (p. 77-99) New York: Palgrave Macmillan. P. 92

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. 97

would need a military that was capable of acting on this stage.¹⁰¹ For the ROKN this was a major opportunity to continue with its modernisation project as a regional navy matched the needs of a President looking to advance the ROK into a regional role.

In the spirit of the aforementioned policies, the administration initiated a '5-year Defense Reform Project'. This was undertaken by a newly created body, the National Defense Reform Committee (NDRC) which was based within the MND, with sub-committees operating within each branch of the armed services.¹⁰² Made up of active and retired military officers and civilians, it was tasked to meet four goals by the 2003. 1) The creation of an elite military force, 2) professionalization of the military, 3) increased efficiency through management reform and defence digitisation and 4) armed forces which were trusted by the public.¹⁰³ These were to be achieved by meeting 58 reform tasks over the 5 years of the government's term. These can be distilled into structural reform (this included, command and education structures), Force Improvement Program (FIP) reform (this included reforming acquisition organisations, increasing transparency, and encouraging defence industry growth), Management Reform (Defense digitisation, logistical support systems and procurement transparency) and Personnel reform (recruitment, promotion and conscription reform).¹⁰⁴

The NDRC is central to examining Kim's security and defence policies as it clearly demonstrates an acknowledgment of the need to modernise and transform the ROK defence

¹⁰¹ While not the first ROK President to dispatch troops on PKO, he was the first to deploy combat troops, when he sent a contingent of troops to assist the 1999 PKO mission in East-Timor (INTERFET). This was done despite considerable opposition within the conservative legislature

¹⁰² MND (1999). *Defense White Paper 1998*. Seoul: Korean Institute of Defense Analysis. 237-238

¹⁰³ MND (2000). *Defense White Paper 1999*. Seoul: MND. 191

¹⁰⁴ MND (2001). *Defense White Paper 2000*. Seoul: MND. 206-218

establishment for the 21st century. In addition, the creation of the NDRC signposted the direction for defence policy transformation, which undertook some of the assumptions made under Kim, Young-sam and developed them in order to match the vision equated with the foreign policies mentioned above, that of change from a defence centred on the DPRK to security based on a greater appreciation of the regional realities and an understanding of the security needs required by a normalised middle power.

The first defence policy document (1998 Defense White Paper) of his term spelled out the concept that national security was not only influenced by the priority of preventing war but also by building a security environment in which cooperation both with the DPRK and regional neighbours was paramount, the need to co-exist with the DPRK in the eventual hope of peaceful reunification and finally and more radically, linking national security with economic recovery and structural reforms. While large sections of the document were devoted to the Sunshine Policy and its security implications, the reasoning behind force development can be seen as a logical continuation of the 1994-'95 Defence White Paper. Thus it can be concluded that with the Kim, Dae-jung government defence policy began once again to move in a more normalised direction. A conclusion that is supported by speech made on Armed Forces day in 1998 where he stated that reform of the armed forces is critical in order to adapt to the new security environment and that this reform must go hand in hand with the reform that was being undertaken in all areas of Korean life.¹⁰⁵

The Defense White Paper of 2000 continued the themes set two years previously. It once

¹⁰⁵ Kim, Dae-jung "Safeguarding the Nation: On the 50th Armed Forces Day (October 1st 1998) In *Government of the People: Selected Speeches of Kim, Dae-jung Vol.I*. Seoul: Office of the President of the Republic of Korea, 1999. 199

again, in-line with explaining the security implications of the Sunshine Policy described the setting of a firm defence posture toward the DPRK, combined with the creation of economic ties with the DPRK and the involvement of the international community in promoting the peace process on the peninsula. But what is significant is the statement that in order to achieve defence objectives *'the current defense policy, centred on preparing for North Korean threats, will be transformed into one that prepares for future threats as well'*.¹⁰⁶ This was an important and definitive statement from the administration that new capabilities and strategies were needed across the military and not just for the naval and air services and was a clear indication of the direction the administration's security policies were going. The development policy also recognised that the ROK would in the future plan for new threat scenarios in order to maximise defence effectiveness. This is reflected in the commitment to increasing efforts in creating bilateral and multilateral diplomatic/defence ties with regional and global partners while maintaining the US alliance.¹⁰⁷

The culmination of defence policy alteration under the Kim administration was spelled out in greater detail in the 2001 publication of Defence Data Statistics¹⁰⁸. Under a plan entitled 'New Defense for the 21st Century', the military would alter its previous strategic focus and embrace the uncertainty of what was termed a changing security environment. This resulted in a 4 point conceptualisation of what 'New Defense' would entail. The first: *'Adherence to Basics'* focus on maintaining the military's ability to respond to both military and non-military threats, regardless of the diplomatic and security relations on the peninsula. The

¹⁰⁶ MND (2001). 69

¹⁰⁷ At this point in the administration, the relationship between the regional powers was a central theme in Kim, Dae-jung and his administrations speeches, linking defence reform and by extension strength with the ability of the ROK to compete in the regional environment.

¹⁰⁸ This was the final major publication by the MND under the Kim, Dae-jung government,

second: '*Management of Change*' called on the defence establishment to be proactive within the peninsular and regional security environments in order to shape security changes in line with ROK interests. This theme focused on the management of ROK-US relations, improving regional military cooperation and cooperating with confidence-building measures between the ROK and the DPRK. The third: '*Preparation for the Future*' related to the creation of armed forces capable of responding to future threats through the construction of an '*Advanced information and technology force of the 21st century*'. Finally, the plan called for winning the approval of the populace to support these changes.¹⁰⁹

Through the policy development described above what becomes evident is that throughout the lifetime of the Kim, Dae-jung government, there was a clear evolution in defence thinking. Along with his centre piece Sunshine Policy, the military was expected to cooperate with and assist in the economic and political normalisation efforts with the DPRK. In addition, defence policy was gradually altered under the realisation that if normalisation efforts with the DPRK succeeded and if the ROK was to become a medium power, it would have to shift its security focus to more regional and global security issues rather than a northward defensive focus. The concept as shown in the previous paragraph, that the policy would have to be proactive in order to shape the ROK's security future, is in the opinion of this author, indicative of the direction that Kim, Dae-jung had for the ROK; No longer a reactive power focused politically and militarily on the North, but one which would have the ability to somewhat shape the security environment around it.

¹⁰⁹ MND (2001) *Defense Data and Statistics 2001*. MND: Seoul. 28-32

The suitability of the ROKN blue water project to meet the goals set out in both the foreign and defence policies combined with Kim, Dae-jung's approval of the plan set out under the previous administration led to some of the most significant force improvements being approved or coming to fruition under his term.

- While the Type 209 submarines were ordered under the Roh, Tae-woo government, 3 Type 214 submarines were ordered in 2000 with the first being laid down in 2003 at the end of the Kim, Dae-jung government's term.
- Final decision for the KDX-II destroyer was made in late 1998 (although initial approval had been given in 1996). The contract was awarded in 1999 and the first of the class was laid down in 2001.
- The KDX-III was delayed due to budget issues related to the Asian financial crisis, while initial Operational Requirements (ROC) were set out in 1996, funding and design approval was given under the Kim, Dae-jung administration.
- ROC set out in 1998 for FFX project
- An order was placed for one *Dokdo* Class LPD in 2002.

An important point to make when assessing the above force improvements is that Kim, Dae-jung had the ability to pull the funding for many of these projects as actual contracts had not been signed when he took office. This indicates a significant commitment to the physical development of the ROKN considering the cost of 1 KDX-III class ship was just under one billion dollars.

But as was stated in section one, platform improvement does not alone suggest the creation of a blue water capable navy. Significant naval policy announcements which were now being

(as with Kim, Young-sam) made at the commencement speeches of the Korean Naval academy and in looking at those, the evolution of overall defence policy above can be matched with the evolution of ROKN policy. In the President's first commencement speech in 1998, he demonstrated recognition that the Navy not only provided an important defence capability in relation to the DPRK but was also central to protecting SLOC and importantly undersea resources. In this he specifically linked economic prosperity with naval strength and additionally, he related ROK expansion in terms of globalisation and influence with the ability to modernise the navy and its mission to look beyond the DPRK as an operational focus.¹¹⁰

"The 21st century will be an age of globalization as well as an age of the sea...There is a saying that only those who conquer the sea can conquer the world. I believe that only a nation that can make the best use of the sea will be a victor on the world stage".¹¹¹

This theme of advancing into the world and the economic importance of the sea is emphasised in his speech of 1999, which also notes that economic competition over sea resources is an area where inter-state conflict could arise. In stating this he acknowledges that the ROK as a medium power must have the ability to defend its own interests within the Northeast Asian maritime environment.¹¹² A position that is expanded upon in the next year, when he links the ROK's potential status as a regional hub with the importance of trade protection and importantly the status of the ROK as maritime power and the navy's role in protecting it as being centrally important. Perhaps for this reason, the concept of a blue

¹¹⁰ Kim Dae-jung, "Advancing in to the World Through the Sea: At the 52nd Commencement Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy (March 16th 1998) In *Government of the People: Selected Speeches of Kim, Dae-jung Vol.1.* Seoul: Office of the President of the Republic of Korea, 1999. 31-34

¹¹¹ *Ibid.* P. 34

¹¹² Kim, Dae-jung "Guarding the Turbulent Sea: At the 53rd Commencement Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy (March 12th 1999) In *Government of the People: Selected Speeches of Kim, Dae-jung Vol. II.* Seoul: Office of the President of the Republic of Korea, 2000. 25

water navy is mentioned for the first time.

*“The navy as a duty of guaranteeing the safety of all ships and tankers going far and near in the glorious tradition of Admirals Yi, Sun-shin and Chang, Po-go.....The navy’s plan to build an ocean going force is well underway . I have the utmost trust in the navy’s plan for the future, and I will lend all available support to them”.*¹¹³

The strength of his argument for naval development reached its peak in 2001, when again he promoted the ROK as a regional hub in Northeast Asia and the necessity for the ROKN to support this goal. His connection between national interests and the ROKN is central to blue water naval development as is seen in the first mention of a Strategic Mobile Fleet which would become the centre of ROKN planning for the next ten years and for the first time a non-DPRK focused mission was explicitly provided, not only to the ROKN but also to the wider public.

“The navy has strenuously prepared to build an ocean going force with a hitch (sic)...In the not too distant future, our navy will have a strategic fleet with the purpose of protecting the national interests and international peace. The government will not spare any effort to help the navy grow into a substantial ocean going force.....The 21st century is being touted as the age of the ocean. All countries are heavily bent on securing marine resources, It is also a reality that various conflicts and confrontations between nations have already surfaced. The Northeast Asian waters are no exception. We cannot emphasize too strongly the importance of securing safe seas. The seas too are our sovereign space. The safety of the homeland depends on our protection of the seas. The

¹¹³ Kim, Dae-jung “In the Glorious Traditions of Admirals Yi Sun-shin and Chang-Po-go: At the 54th Commencement Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy (March 16th 2000) In *Government of the People: Selected Speeches of Kim, Dae-jung Vol. III* Seoul: Office of the President of the Republic of Korea, 2001.73-74

*survival and prosperity of the nation is on your shoulders”.*¹¹⁴

What is evident when examining the Kim, Dae-jung foreign and defence policies is that ROKN development and its Blue Water goals fitted in with the administration's goals for the ROK. The importance of economic development and the normalisation of the ROK as a medium power combined with his radical desire for the ROK to have regional strategic, political and economic leverage. These concepts were predicated on having a strong national defence base and as a result, the maritime nature of Northeast Asia resulted in the ROKN being central to these policy goals. In addition the underlying focus on more positive relation with the DPRK and the beginnings of a recasting of ROK security thinking away from the peninsular dynamic towards regional operations allowed the ROKN's development goals to prosper under his leadership. Thus the creation of a blue-water capable navy, approved by the previous right wing administration also found approval in the next left wing one, an important step for such a long-term project.

VII.IV ROH, MOO-HYUN (2003-2008): AN INDEPENDENT DEFENCE POSTURE

The election of Roh, Moo-hyun to the Presidency in 2003 signalled the start of a profound shift in the ROK's foreign and security policy. Coming to power with the support of a younger generation of voters, he successfully took advantage of a growing anti-American feeling within the ROK and promised to create a more equal partnership between the ROK and the USA. Building upon the ideas of his predecessor he promoted a more independent form of

¹¹⁴ Kim, Dae-jung "An Ever Strong Security Stance: At the 55th Commencement Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy (March 19th 2001) In *Government of the People: Selected Speeches of Kim, Dae-jung Vol. IV*. Seoul: Office of the President of the Republic of Korea, 2002

foreign and defence policy, emphasizing the need for the ROK to create its own path in reaching its foreign policy goals.¹¹⁵ As a result the US-ROK alliance would, instead of being the central foundation of defence policy, become a pillar in a multi-faceted reorganisation of ROK strategic thought, embracing the previous government's 'Sunshine Policy' while also emphasising the ROK's need to find its own place within the Northeast Asian security environment.¹¹⁶ This would be achieved through a radical overhaul of the ROK's military defence posture which would provide for a Self-Reliant Defense Posture. While his policies signalled a new direction for the ROK and its defence posture especially in their extent and vision, they too followed the underlying precepts that the two previous governments held that of pushing the ROK into a position that was coherent with its rising economic status and the realities of both the regional and international environments.

Central to Roh's plans was an all embracing foreign and security policy, titled: 'The Peace and Prosperity Policy'. Outlined in a national security document published in 2004, it was designed to encompass increased and improved ROK-DPRK relations, multilateral and bi-lateral regional and international agreements, a realigned relationship with the US and an independent defence policy. Importantly it was the first true national security document created by a ROK government setting out goals and describing the linkages between diplomacy, international relations, peninsular issues and overall national security.

The previous administration's policy toward the DPRK was continued under the Roh. It adhered to the concept of promoting peace through the formalisation of ties with the DPRK.

¹¹⁵ Sheen, S-H (2008) *Strategic Thought Toward Asia in the Roh Moo-hyun Era* In Rozman, Hyun & Lee (Ed) *ROK Strategic Thought Toward Asia* (p. 101-126) New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 102

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

Over the term of the government a number of inter-Korean projects were started or improved upon, including increased opportunities for ROK tourists to visit Mt. Gungang (a famous mountain in the DPRK), the creation of an industrial complex at Kaesong, where ROK businesses could set up manufacturing plants using ROK equipment but with a DPRK labour force and the completion of improved transport links between the two sides including rail and road connections.¹¹⁷ However, this cooperation took place against the backdrop of the second North Korean Nuclear Crisis, during which significant policy differences were exposed between the carrot approach of the ROK based on dialogue and cooperation and the stick approach of the US administration which since 9/11 had hardened its security stance and thus favoured sanctions and increased international pressure on the regime. Despite increased provocation, including a nuclear test and missile tests the ROK continued to promote cooperative engagement against the wishes of the US. By 2007 the two sides had come closer on a plan to deal with the DRPK and achieve nuclear disarmament, but what the actions of the Roh government demonstrated was that the administration was no longer willing to wait for US agreement on such security issues and was now looking to assert its own foreign and security policy.

A second strand of the Peace and Prosperity Policy was the placing of the ROK within the regional geo-political order, thus building on the work of Kim, Dae-jung. In this regard two concepts stand out, that of the ROK as a regional hub and that of the ROK as a regional balancer. The hub concept had, as written in the previous section, its foundation in the previous government, Roh continued and expanded on it thinking that the ROK was the

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.* P.104-105, MND (2007) *Defense White Paper 2006*. Seoul: MND. 283

perfect place for the economies of Northeast Asia to intersect.¹¹⁸ The balancer concept was a clearly defined departure for the ROK. Drawing on Korea's historical lessons of being dominated by the great Asian powers in its past, Roh wanted to position the ROK so that it could play a more proactive role in Northeast Asia. He envisioned a ROK which would be able to mediate or take a neutral role in possible regional conflicts, while at the same time take issue with developments which would adversely affect the ROK.¹¹⁹ What this would mean in effect would be a larger effort toward multi-lateral security structures separate from but in acknowledgement to the US alliance which would assist in creating a prosperous Northeast Asia.¹²⁰ The development of such a strategy can be seen as an evolution of the previous government's efforts towards regional cooperation however, this was a much stronger statement of the ROK's move towards an independent regional security posture. A fact confirmed by initiatives aimed at closer security ties with the PRC (at the risk of offending his U.S. ally) and the intention of avoiding being drawn into a regional conflict between the US, Japan and the PRC.^{121 122}

A final piece of Roh's new foreign policy was the formal attempt at redefining ties with the US. Setting aside the difficulties between the two countries stated above, the Roh government oversaw some of the biggest changes to the alliance since the Korean War. These changes were not only initiated by the ROK but also by the changing force posture of

¹¹⁸ Roh, Moo-Hyun (2003) *Address by the President Roh, Moo-hyun on the 84th March First Independence Movement Day* (01/03/2003) retrieved from www.16cwnd.pa.go.kr (13/02/2010)

¹¹⁹ Roh, Moo-hyun (2005) *Address at the 40th Commencement and Commissioning Ceremony of the Third Korea Military Academy* (22/03/2005) retrieved from www.16cwnd.pa.go.kr (13/02/2010)

¹²⁰ Lee, J-H (2007) *Balanced and Pragmatic Diplomacy: Conceptual Background and Accomplishments*. In Lee, Su-H (ed.) *Security and Foreign Policy of the ROK Government* (p.70-103) Seoul: Happy Reading Books. 71-74

¹²¹ Kim, S-S (2006). 74-75

¹²² Roo, Moo-Hyun (2005) *Address at the 53rd Commencement and Commissioning Ceremony of the Korean Air Force Academy* (08/03/2005) retrieved from www.16cwnd.pa.go.kr (13/02/2010)

the US which was at the time focused on force realignment and increasing the role of its allies in their own defence, this suited the ROK which was looking for “*mutually beneficial, cooperative and mature allied relations with the US on the basis of its increased national power derived from economic growth*”¹²³. As a result a number of fundamental alterations were set in motion, including the rebasing of US forces in Korea (USFK), the reduction in numbers of USFK from around 37,000 to 25,000, the transferring of military missions to the ROK and most importantly the proposed transferring of OPCON to a ROK general.^{124 125}

The Roh government is often seen as anti-American, mainly by those who focus on the difficulties of the relationship over the DPRK and PRC policies plus Roh’s anti-American rhetoric during his election campaign.¹²⁶ However, the argument that he was seeking a more equal alliance not only based on defence but also based on economic and political ties stands up to scrutiny when Roh’s deployment of troops to Afghanistan and Iraq and his support of the US-ROK Free Trade Agreement are taken into account. This is confirmed by Sheen:

*“Alongside dispatching troops to Iraq, the FTA was seen as one of the most concrete proofs of South Korea’s commitment to the alliance, as Roh argued that it had been successfully restructured and was ready for the next 50 years.”*¹²⁷

What can be concluded from the above foreign policy direction is that the Roh government was attempting to radically re-define the ROK’s role in defence and foreign policy matters.

¹²³ MND (2007). 210

¹²⁴ *Ibid.* 208-222

¹²⁵ The issue of OPCON transfer was one of the most heated within the ROK. Many conservatives and military officers were opposed to the concept on the grounds that it would weaken the alliance and put ROK security in jeopardy. Transfer was agreed to take place in 2012.

¹²⁶ Kim, S-S. (2006). 270

¹²⁷ Sheen (2008). 120

The more independent alignment that Roh strove for was furthered in his directives for the military. Under the concept of “cooperative self-reliant defense” the administration attempted to link the foreign policy moves mentioned above with the creation of a military capable of undertaking autonomous defence of the ROK and meeting its security needs both traditional and new without the explicit reliance on the U.S. Thus national security was to be achieved through the linking of military-cooperation with neighbouring states, a greater involvement in multi-lateral regional security institutions and collective security institutions (by this the ROK meant the UN) and through an altered US-alliance all underpinned by a self-sufficient military. While a Self-reliant Defence policy had been initiated by Park, Chung-hee, it had for a considerable time been dormant and the fundamental nature of the US Alliance and ROK forces had remained the same of a significant period of time. The shift in ROK defence posture which to some extent meant moving away from a focus on the DPRK involved preparing for future threats with an independent military that was not reliant on the U.S. for support.

This self-sufficiency was to be achieved through a plan named Defense reform 2020. Aimed at being an all aspect modernisation of the ROK military, its stated goal was to create a force capable of coping both with the ROK’s perception of the changing security environment (including the changes in US alliance) and the technological developments in war fighting.¹²⁸ This was as Roh stated a necessary step for the ROK to maintain a presence in the international arena coherent with its economic standing.¹²⁹ The key objectives as laid out by Han were as follows:

¹²⁸ MND (2005), *Defense Reform 2020*. Seoul: Ministry of National Defence.

¹²⁹ Roh, Moo-hyun (2003) “Address by the President Roh, Moo-hyun on the 55th Armed Forces Day” (01/10/2003) retrieved from www.16cwnd.pa.gov.kr (19/07/2011)

- Force restructuring
 - The reduction in size of the overall military from 680,000 to 500,000 men. This would entail the army downsizing from 548,000 to 371,000, the navy from 68,000 to 64,000 and the retention of air-force personnel levels at 65,000.
 - At the same time, there would be a focus on high-technology equipment to offset the troop reductions.
- The Civilianisation of the MND
 - An increase in the percentage of civilians working in the MND by 2009 would be implemented.
 - Assembly confirmation hearings for political appointees and the Chairman of the JCS.
- Strengthening of the JCS system
 - The JCS would become the centre of operational deployments.
 - The three services would have a more equal representation in the JCS with 2:1:1 (army, navy, air force) division.
 - The Chairman of the JCS and the Vice-Chairman would be drawn from different services.
 - There would be an increased focus on operational jointness.¹³⁰

Clearly what the proposed reform was centred around was moving away from a man-power centric force towards a technological centred force, and this move specifically affected the

¹³⁰ This breakdown of significant points was taken from Han, Y.S (2006). Analyzing Korea's Defense Reform 2020 In *The Korean Journal of Defense Analysis*. XVIII(1). 111-134. 116-118

army. The consequences for the navy however were less explicit. The reform document stated that the ROKN would have to move away from the coastal force structure towards one that could protect national interests on a multi-front basis, including SLOC protection, resource protection and taking responsibility for national security on a regional basis.¹³¹ However, the most striking element is that naval proportions of the plan did not make many significant changes to the force or mission status as conceived under Kim, Young-sam and enunciated under Kim, Dae-jung. What it succeeded in doing was clarifying the operational structure for blue water operations thus confirming that the transition from coastal to blue-water was taking place.¹³² The measures for such a transition included:

- Restructuring the ROKN, through adding a submarine and aviation command and formalising the mobile flotilla concept which had been approved by Kim, Young-sam and formally announced by Kim, Dae-jung.
- Approval for Jeju Naval Base
- The reduction of the overall size of the fleet through the decommissioning of older patrol craft which were to be replaced with more capable but fewer platforms.
- The reinforcement of naval aviation squadrons particularly helicopter capability.¹³³
- An unspecified number of coastline and harbour protection duties would be transferred to police/civilian authority.¹³⁴

Thus if Defence Reform 2020 was the administration's grand vision for the ROK military over the following 15 years and no significant changes were made to the plans drawn up in the Kim, Young-sam era, it is logical to conclude that the blue-water plan matched Roh's concept

¹³¹ MND (2006). *Defense Reform 2020*. Seoul: MND. 16

¹³² Bennett, B. W. (2006) *A Brief Analysis of Korea's Defense Reform Plan*. Santa Monica: Rand Corporation. 5

¹³³ This was alluded to but full details have not been made public.

¹³⁴ MND (2006). 247

of what the ROK military should look like. Its focus on high-technology platforms met with the administrations over-riding defence reform goals while the independent nature of proposed ROKN operations meant that ROKN reform was commensurate with Roh's vision of ROK security, that of independence from the U.S. and the ability defend against future threats that his security policies envisioned.

Indeed Roh from the start of his administration embraced the ROKN's growing blue-water capability. Using a speech in 2003 to the Korean Naval Academy, he made the ROKN a central pillar to delivering his plan for regional cooperation while at the same time protecting the ROK from potential regional conflict. He also espoused the idea of the ROK operating on a world stage stating that the ROKN should protect the ROK's growing interests across the world.¹³⁵ Indeed as many of the major platforms came online during Roh's tenure, he used ship launches as platforms to espouse his foreign policies and assert the ROK's regional role. At the launch of the first *Aegis* destroyer Roh used the opportunity to emphasise the role of the ROKN in regional security and also his views on the security situation in Northeast Asian, stating,

'As you know well, South and North Korea will not keep picking quarrels with each other forever. I believe that in the foreseeable future, Northeast Asia will move toward an order of reconciliation, cooperation and integration. It is my firm belief that just as the global international order is moving in that direction, Northeast Asia will have no choice but to follow suit. But at the present time, Northeast Asia is still in

¹³⁵ Roh, Moo-hyun (2003) "Address by President Roh Moo-hyun at the 57th Graduation and Commissioning Ceremony of the Korean Naval Academy" (13/03/2003) retrieved from www.16cwnd.pa.go.kr (13/02/2010)

*an arms race, and we cannot just sit back and watch.*¹³⁶

This statement sums up Roh's policies and the role the ROKN played in his security vision, the view of a regional arms race was to some extent hyperbolic but it does reinforce his vision of an Asia that was competitive and of an ROK that needed to independently match developments in the region for its own security. In one statement at the launch of one albeit significant vessel the President linked his view of ROK security with the ROKN, while his policy was unconventional it was essential for the navy in order for it to continue its development.

The Roh administration built upon many of the policies of governments before it, yet its views of regional security and having an independent defence capability were radical and changed the way the ROK modernised its armed forces and looked at the region. As has been shown the administration was not specifically anti-American but was looking to redefine the relationship to a more equal partnership. The independence of the ROKN was key to such a drive, if the ROK was to be an active middle power and regional actor a strong navy was essential. While it is true that ROKN's blue water plans were well underway before he took office, he crucially accepted the move away from a coastal fleet as that fit within his vision for the ROK's future defence capability. Again as in the case of Kim, Dae-jung while the platform capability was being developed, the overall blue-water mission was embraced by this administration providing crucial continuity for ROKN development.

¹³⁶ Roh, Moo-hyun (2007) "President Celebrates Aegis Destroyer Launch" (25/05/2007) retrieved from www.16cwnd.pa.go.kr (20/07/2011)

VII.V LEE, MYUNG-BAK (2008-2013): LOOKING TOWARD THE NORTH

The transition of power to Lee, Myung-bak in 2008 signified a shift in ROK politics as his election was the first for a right-wing conservative president in 10 years. As with the previous administrations, the government published a comprehensive security document linking foreign affairs, defence and the economy. Under the banner of “Global Korea” it provided a more developed concept of the ROK’s place in the international community and as such can be seen as a natural expansion in many of the areas that previous administrations espoused, particularly in developing the ROK’s place in the world.

The “Global Korea” concept was predicated on the achievement of 4 strategic objectives: 1) Inter-Korean Relations, 2) Cooperative Network Diplomacy, 3) A results oriented foreign policy, 4) Future-oriented and Advanced Security System.¹³⁷ These objectives were similar if not more ambitious than the goals set out under Roh, but the method for attaining them changed fundamentally.

This is clear in Lee’s DPRK policy which was a rejection of the accommodating Sunshine initiative of the previous 10 years. His “Mutual Benefits and Common Prosperity” policy called for denuclearisation and a resultant effort to increase the economic well-being of the DPRK and its citizens. In reality this was a tough regime where concessions and assistance to the DPRK would be given if they relinquished their nuclear weapons and opened their

¹³⁷ Office of the President (2009) *Global Korea: The National Security Strategy of the Republic of Korea*. Seoul: Office of the President. 11

political system.¹³⁸ This was a fall back to the more defensive policies of ROK governments before Kim, Dae-jung and reflects the belief that the ROK had stopped taking the DPRK threat seriously and had been giving aid and financial inducements for very little return.¹³⁹ As will be seen this change in policy had in the first half of his tenure a large rhetorical but little actual effect on the defence policies of the government.

The second major policy shift was U.S. alliance management. Lee, prior to election described US-ROK relations under Roh as ill-managed and he intended to reset the alliance once more making it central to the security of the ROK while at the same time cooperating with the US on the global stage.¹⁴⁰ While accepting the agreements and alliance transformation aspects which had been agreed under the Roh-Bush governments, his re-alignment of the ROK's DPRK policy fit closely with that of the Obama administration and under a 2009 initiative between the two leaders, the US restated its support for the ROK and the Mutual Defense Treaty, while at the same time extending the alliance so that it would operate on a cooperative regional and global basis.¹⁴¹ A fact confirmed by the ROK's further deployment of troops to Afghanistan and its joining of the Proliferation Security initiative.^{142 143} These developments reflected not only Lee's belief in the necessity of the security alliance but also his belief that the ROK needed to expand its reciprocal commitment to the U.S.

¹³⁸ For a detailed description of Lee DPRK policy see: Suh, J-J (2009) *"The Lee Myung-bak Government's North Korea Policy: A Study on its Historical and Theoretical Foundation"*. Seoul: Korea Institute for National Unification.

¹³⁹ Jung, S-K (2007) *"Lee, Myung-bak to Revise Sunshine Strategy"* retrieved from www.koreatimes.co.kr (08/07/2011)

¹⁴⁰ Sheen, S-H (2009) *"A Smart Alliance in the Age of Complexity; Rok-U.S. Alliance in the 21st Century"* East Asia Institute: EAI Issue Briefing No. MASI 2009-02. 1

¹⁴¹ The Statement made on 16/06/2009 was called *"Joint Vision For the Alliance of The United States of America and The Republic of Korea"* available from www.whitehouse.gov

¹⁴² In June 2010 the ROK dispatched 320 troops to support a ROK led PRT in Afghanistan.

¹⁴³ The ROK under President Roh rejected joining the PSI as it feared it could damage its DPRK policy and provoke a diplomatic backlash from the PRC.

Additionally, it reflected his understanding that for the ROK to operate in a global environment it would need the support of the U.S. particularly in the face of the rising power of the PRC in the Northeast Asian region. It is clear that Lee brought the U.S. back to centre stage in ROK security and this was evident in dealings with the PRC, while Kim, Dae-jung and Roh, Moo-hyun sought active engagement with them often risking Washington's ire for being too close to Beijing, Lee to a large extent embraced U.S. policies and while continuing and developing economic engagement distanced himself from the PRC politically, thus effectively ending the balancing role that Roh had attempted to create for the ROK.

Although the concentration on DPRK relations had primacy in the Lee security strategy, the diplomatic and foreign policy initiatives proposed under 'Global Korea' were quite extensive, with a system of bi-lateral and multi-lateral initiatives with regional partners aimed at promoting further economic and cultural integration and deeper security cooperation.¹⁴⁴ In addition there was a commitment to the ROK increasing its commitment to wider Asian regional forums such as the ARF and ASEAN.¹⁴⁵ At the same time there was a more independently minded focus on improving the ROK's global economic and security ties, with an increased emphasis on energy security.¹⁴⁶ Something that was evidenced by the drive for free trade agreements between the ROK and strategic partners such as the EU and the PRC and an energy agreement between the ROK and the UAE which guarantees energy contracts and defence industry cooperation in exchange for the deployment of ROK SOF to the country in a training capacity. In line with this greater focus on diplomacy and a larger international role is a commitment to greater contributions to foreign aid programs and

¹⁴⁴ Office of the President (2009). 22-25

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.* 26

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.* 27-28

international development with a concurrent commitment to UNPKO.¹⁴⁷ Indeed the ROK military under Lee created dedicated units for UNPKO missions and sent peacekeepers and engineering units to Haiti (MINUSTAH) and Lebanon (UNIFIL). What this suggests was that the administration, in terms of its global ambition, had while altering its regional commitments built upon the efforts of previous governments to promote the ROK worldwide and has created a focused strategy for economic/strategic security beyond the strictures of the peninsular dynamic.

The final strand of the national security strategy was developing a future-oriented security system specifically regarding the structure and composition of the armed forces. Prior to election, Lee and his advisors criticised the Defense Reform 2020 plan, believing that it did not take into account the worsening relationship with the DPRK, that it was too expensive and that downsizing the Army to such an extent was not advisable or politically advantageous.¹⁴⁸ However, once in office this position changed and limited amendments to the plan were proposed instead of a full scale revision. The revisions reduced the rate of increase on military spending and made efforts to refocus the military back to the threat from the North. This was reflected in the proposed reinforcement of the ROKMC through providing them with a rapid response capability and alterations to the restructuring of the ROKA.¹⁴⁹ However, importantly, despite committing to the majority of the troop reductions set out in the original plan, the amendments stated that maintaining a defensive capability against the DPRK would take precedence. Importantly for the ROKN the amendments did

¹⁴⁷ MND (2011), *"Defense White Paper 2010"* Seoul: MND. 90-91

¹⁴⁸ The National Institute for Defense Studies (2009), *"East Asian Strategic Review"*. Tokyo: The Japan Times.99

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*100 & Ministry of National Defence (2009) *"Public Announcement of Defense Basic Reform Plan (2009-2020)"* retrieved from www.mnd.go.kr (08/02/2010)

not make any reference to altering the missions/FIP set out in the original plan.¹⁵⁰

Suggesting that 1) the ROKN's blue-water project had the support of the government as it suited its foreign/security agenda and 2) that there was a continued belief that ROKA was responsible for defence against the DPRK attack and that ROKN was somewhat free to continue its development aimed at future and non-traditional security needs.

However despite the indications that ROKN modernisation had government support it is clear that their position towards ROKN modernisation was much more opaque. The 2008 Defense White Paper did include measures to continue building blue water capable vessels and the 'Global Korea' Policy Initiative suggested that SLOC protection and energy security were particularly important, something that Lee himself confirmed in 2008 speech. However, procurement policies in the initial part of his term suggested otherwise. During his tenure, the reorienting of the military and its force improvement programs back towards the DPRK was particularly problematic for the ROKN. With shrinking defence budgets and an altered security focus, new procurement for the ROKN in terms of fresh platform development dried up despite commitments to the contrary. This was particularly apparent in the freezing of the 3000 ton submarine program and the delay's to the PKX and FFX projects.¹⁵¹ The '2010-14 Mid-term Defense Plan' also failed to mention any significant force improvements for the ROKN, instead focusing on developing technologies designed to counter the DPRK and improve the ROK's deterrence capabilities.¹⁵²

¹⁵⁰ The National Institute for Defense Studies (2009). P. 101

¹⁵¹ Lee, S.H (2010) Issue of the Oceanic Navy and Complement of Naval Force after Warship Cheonan-ham incident, *Sejong Commentary No 181*. Seoul: Sejong Institute

¹⁵² Ministry of National Defense (2009) '10-'14 Mid-term Defence Plan <'10-'14 국방중기 계획> Seoul: Ministry of National Defence

This reduction in funding for naval modernisation came in the face of ROKN's first blue water deployment to the Gulf of Aden, such a deployment met the aims of the administration's policies and demonstrated the advantages of having a blue water capable navy, yet Lee's overall naval policies while suggesting support actually provided very little new in the way of continuing platform development. Thus for the first time in 15 years the ROKN faced significant challenges to maintaining modernisation and realising its blue water goals.

VII.VI POLITICS, SECURITY AND THE SINKING OF THE CHEONAN

This challenge would become even more apparent following the sinking of the *Cheonan* and the shelling of Yeonpyeong-do. The first major political consequence was a national security review launched in May 2010 which pointed to a number of weaknesses in the ability to defend and to respond to attacks both in the operational and command and control areas also as was pointed in Chapter 6 the ROKN came in for substantial political and public criticism. The review resulted in a new defence reform titled 'Defence Reform 307' and later renamed 'Defense Reform 11-30'. This defence plan reorients ROK defence planning away from future threats and towards meeting the current threat from the DPRK. In doing so it ranks operational priorities in this order: (1) Regional provocations and a-symmetric threats (for regional read DPRK), (2) all out war, (3) potential threats.¹⁵³ In order to meet such priorities the plan advocates *active deterrence* which is designed to counter the threat or DPRK provocations. What this means in practice is not particularly clear but there seems to

¹⁵³ National Institute of Defense Studies (2012). East Asian Strategic Review 2012. Tokyo: NIDS. 74

be a focus on procuring technologies that would only prevent the DPRK from undertaking a provocation but would punish them if they did so, suggesting ROK retaliation following future incidents.¹⁵⁴ As this is yet to be seen in operation it is unknown if it will be effective.

These changes have potentially significant implications for the blue-water project and the ROKN. Taking the concept that political policy and presidential approval has been key in allowing ROKN development to continue, policy changes could impact it significantly. ROKN development had primarily been focused on a building toward dealing with a multitude of threats, however with the alteration of procurement priorities this must change so the ROKN can respond or be seen to respond to future DPRK provocation on small scale level as opposed to all-out war in both the East and West Seas.¹⁵⁵ Something that seems to be confirmed by the increased level of naval exercises off the both coasts of the DPRK, exercises which have focused on anti-submarine warfare. Indeed within the ROKN itself there is considerable concern that the sinking of the *Cheonan* would have a significant impact on political support for the blue-water concept, a fear which in the aftermath of the sinking seemed to be somewhat justified.^{156 157}

The effect on procurement has been quite dramatic with the PKX and FFX programs being accelerated, ostensibly to increase the ROKN's ability to counter the KPN's submarine capability. A fact confirmed by the '2012-2016 Mid-Defense Plan' which emphasises the

¹⁵⁴ Ibid. 77

¹⁵⁵ Ibid

¹⁵⁶ Information provided to author in interviews with retired command-level ROKN officers.

¹⁵⁷ This concern was highlighted by a number of media reports which called into question the actions of the ROKN during the sinking and the Blue-water development policy. See Yoo, Jee-ho (2011), "Navy to Get New Course After Loss of the *Cheonan*", (24/05/2011) retrieved from <http://joongangdaily.joins.com> (03/07/2011)

need to develop sea control around the peninsula and protect maritime traffic within this area of operations.¹⁵⁸ The only major new procurement program which is going ahead is the construction of a new class of LST reports indicate that they will be approximately 7,500 tons and of the same concept, albeit smaller, as the Royal Navy's *Albion Class* LPD or the USN's *San Antonio Class*. The construction of such vessels fits with the Lee government's pre and post Cheonan policy of reinforcing the ROKMC and since amphibious operations would be most likely aimed at the DPRK, this is a project aimed at the current time at peninsular operations.

A second issue which would affect the ROKN is the proposed change of the command and control structures and the focus on joint operations. The changes put forward would put the majority of command and control functions under the remit of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, which is nominally a position given to an army general.¹⁵⁹ While this will be done to streamline operational command, there has been significant resistance by both the ROKN and the ROKAF who fear their services will be either subsumed into the ROKA or their influence on planning, personnel and procurement substantially reduced.¹⁶⁰

While these plans have not been finalised and there are some indications that they have stalled to some extent as the Lee administration's tenure came to an end, the period since 2009 has shown how the ROKN is both at the mercy of its political masters and their policies

¹⁵⁸ MND (2011a) '12-'16 *Mid Term Defence Plan Confirmation, National Assembly Report* <'12-'16 국방중기계획 확정, 국회보고> Seoul: MND

¹⁵⁹ Bennet, Bruce W. (2011) "*The Korean Defense Reform 307 Plan*". The Asian Institute for Policy Studies, Issue Brief No.8.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* This resistance has been reported throughout the Korean media and has taken the form of pressure groups and statement by retired senior level officers.

toward the DPRK and the actions of the DPRK itself. The long-term nature of naval force development means that political commitment is required over a sustained period, something that the ROKN enjoyed until the election of Lee. While the ROKN itself had planned for developing its littoral forces as well, the reduction in commitment to regional operations has affected in the short term at least their ability to plan for the future. The power of the executive in the ROK means that the ROKN is at the mercy of political considerations and changes in administration. This will be seen in the newly elected Park administration as there is some commitment to building larger platforms in the future over the long term, how long these commitments will last as this Chapter has demonstrated is at the mercy of each government's defence and foreign policies and their reaction to events that occur on the peninsula.

The ROKN has enjoyed sustained political support and its goals have matched the altered security identity of the ROK which democracy introduced. This chapter has demonstrated how the strands of increased naval ambition combined with democracy and an altered security policy have led to support for a regional role for the ROKN, but this support is not a given, it is dependent on the political situation and the policy goals of each administration. Changes in the political orientation of the country, the cost of platform procurement and the shifting nature of internal political security calculations risk long term blue water development and leave the ROKN vulnerable in terms of its development and its desire to create a coherent, multi-tasking force structure.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The modernisation of the ROKN is a misunderstood and under analysed subject. The function of this thesis is to examine the drivers, hindrances and influences of ROKN modernisation. In order to do this the research has surveyed the external and internal motivations of ROKN modernisation and looked at what it is in the context of the ROK, its geo-strategic situation and internal politics. As a result, this thesis has sought to explain how an inward looking nation has developed a regional outlook which had supported the creation of a powerful navy while at the same time ensuring that its security within the limitations of the threat posed by the DPRK is maintained. In order to examine this problem, the study has undertaken to answer the following questions.

- How and why has the ROK's interaction with the sea changed and how has its perception of the maritime security environment influenced the modernisation of the ROKN?
- What is the true nature of ROKN modernisation in terms of the interaction between technological development, platform procurement and doctrinal change?
- What are the prospects for such naval modernisation to succeed in the goals set for it?
- What role has the US played in ROKN modernisation, have they helped or hindered such development?
- What is the linkage between overall military modernisation, the defence industry and

the ROKN?

- How have the ROKN attempted to create a naval identity and how successful have they been in changing the nature of the traditional ROK security consciousness?
- What is the relationship between democracy and the ROKN's modernisation program?

In answering these questions the thesis makes a unique contribution, as in the context of the reviewed literature it is the first time that ROKN modernisation has been viewed as a result of a synthesis between internal political change, technological and economic developments, a growing external interaction, alliance changes and an overall alteration in ROK security policy which has led to a wider appreciation of the geo-strategic situation in East Asia.

In addition, the thesis concludes that the objective of ROKN modernisation is not purely a regional or blue-water capability but rather is an overall increase in capabilities, ranging from the defensive to power projection. This increase is aimed at providing the ROK with a navy capable of acting independently against a wide range of threats, both traditional and non traditional, as such the goal is for a regional operating capability rather than a permanent presence on the high seas with a powerful deterrent capacity within the littoral.

In this context, the sinking of the *Cheonan* provides new and additional evidence surrounding not only the inherent tension between a move toward the regional and the retention of littoral forces but also the difficulties the ROKN faces in maintaining long term force development plans in the face of altering political and strategic priorities in Seoul.

As a result, through the utilisation of new documents and author conducted interviews this

thesis provides a valuable insight in to the conditions necessary for a navy moving from a small littoral force to one capable of blue water operations. The external determinants while important are not the only factor as the this work demonstrates, the development of a naval mindset within government, the economic imperatives of naval construction and the desire to provide for an independent defence capability are also vital as is long term political and monetary commitment.

Placing the ROKN and its modernisation within the context of wider Asian and even global naval development is a complex exercise and one that is beyond the scope of this thesis. The ROK's unique security situation with an unstable and unpredictable land border but total reliance on the sea as a means of trade and economic survival is something that sets the ROKN apart from other navies in the region. In addition as this thesis demonstrates, naval modernisation is the product of a multitude of factors both internal and external, many of which are only relevant to the ROK and would different for other countries. Assessing such modernisation within a framework that provides for an analysis of wider Asian naval modernisation would be the next stage of this research at a post-doctoral level.

East Asia has in the last 20 years seen a dramatically increased interaction with the sea. With some of the world's largest importers and exporters reliant on its use, the sea has become a significant factor in the economic prosperity of the region. Even more important is that for countries such as Japan and the PRC, the need for energy supplied by the sea is vital. At the same time the introduction of the UNCLOS regime has ignited a series of territorial and jurisdictional disputes which have been compounded by historical animosities and energy completion. This combination of increased need and increased tension has placed great

attention on the sea, its uses and its security in East Asia and with conflict an ever present possibility the issue of securing maritime interests is a pressing one.

The ROK is not immune from such factors, with a powerful and developed economy springing from the ashes of the Korean War, the geo-strategic island has looked at the sea as a medium for import and export, a lifeline for vital energy supplies and as a method of wealth production. This reliance however does not mean that the ROK has always looked at the oceans as a security issue. The focus of the ROK defence establishment on the threat from the DPRK limited the country's ability to look farther abroad toward potential regional threats. This is not to say that the ROK ignored the sea as a security issue, but that it was viewed within the limitations of the threat from the North. As a result of this the ROKN was focused on deterring the DPRK and protecting the ROK from infiltration. What must be understood is that the DPRK remains the primary focus of the ROKN. Within the context of the modernisation period, the fluctuating threat from the DPRK has always been taken into account.

Alongside this perception has been the developing understanding of the ROK's need to protect its maritime territory and jurisdiction from outside forces. This threat is mainly focused on the PRC and Japan and is informed by the ROK's own history where traditionally, it has been the victim of the machinations of its two larger neighbours. With current disputes with both countries over EEZ boundaries and possession of territory the ROK has recognised the need to protect what it perceives as its legal and historical claims to the seas around the peninsula. With the naval build-up that the PRC is undertaking and the extant superiority of JMSDF forces, the ROKN is keenly aware of the need to possess a force

capable of deterring these two large powers from territorial incursions.

The perception of a regional threat is more complex, the ROK fears its vital SLOC being disrupted by the increasing tensions within the East Asian maritime environment. The disputes over the Senkaku, Paracel and Spratly Islands and the existing tension between the PRC and the U.S. all serve to inform the direction of ROKN modernisation. The ROK does not have any interest in these disputes in so much as they are not directly involved, but it fears that being a third party, its SLOC to the Middle East may be disrupted and protection not granted by the warring parties. As such the ROK has seen the need for an independent naval capability able to protect its interests in a potentially unstable regional environment

Taking these three elements together it is clear that as a motivating factor the external maritime environment is a significant driver of ROKN modernisation. The difficulties that it faces are the multitude of missions that it is looking to undertake. While needing to maintain a significant littoral capability to ensure that deterrence is effective, it also has needed to develop its forces in to one capable of regional operations. This is indicative of a force commensurate with a country which despite having the most militarised border in the world has growing regional and global interests driven by a successful economy. As such the ROK needs an independent, capable regional navy capable of dealing with the perceived threat environment in both the littoral and the regional.

The ability of the ROKN to fulfil such a role is more questionable, the force modernisation program the ROKN has undertaken since the early 1990s is a cross platform development of capabilities, with the replacement of old vessels and the introduction of platforms the

ROKN has never before possessed. This would require a multitude of platforms including submarines, VSTOL capable ships and Aegis destroyers. However, the delivery of such capabilities has proved more problematic, as the ROKN has struggled to maintain a balance between the regional and the littoral.

The actual force modernisation programs have been formed around the development of a number of new platforms. These include 3 classes of destroyer of which one, the KDX-III, is equipped with AEGIS, the procurement of more Type-214 submarines, the production of a larger 14,000 ton LPD and the development of a new class of frigate and patrol craft. These developments have increased the operational potential of the ROKN quite significantly, with the KDX-III and the smaller KDX-II capable of area air defence, and strike capabilities being included on the KDX-III and on the type-214 submarine. The LPD has further increased the ROKN's power projection capabilities; however the production of only one out of a proposed three provides an indicator into the difficulties the ROKN face in developing large platforms over a sustained period of time in the face of a multitude of pressing needs and its tertiary position in the ROK's defence structure.

More interesting in determining the nature of the modernisation is the force structure that is in place. This structure is a derivation of one developed in 1985 which was designed to better manage the threat from the KPN. Divided into three fleets, each charged with a geographic region around the peninsula, this structure is concerned with preventing infiltration and maintaining deterrence. Each fleet is composed of patrol craft, corvettes and frigates and has as a flag ship the smallest of the newer destroyers, the KDX-I. Outside of this structure are a number of flotillas dedicated to operating around the three fleets

and reinforcing when necessary. It is from this that the mobile flotilla operates. This is key in understanding the nature of the ROKN's regional commitment. Comprised of all of the KDX-II & III, it is charged with responding to emergencies on both sides of the peninsula and to regional threats if needed. As such while it is the regional component of the ROKN, its dual tasking suggests that its primary mission remains within the littoral. The weakness of this flotilla can also be seen in its limited size. Comprised of 9 ships, with the final KDX-III recently delivered the force numbers taking into consideration training, refit and possibility of individual ships being dispatched on other missions means that potentially it will not have the mission strength to undertake the range of requirements tasked to it.

In relation to the force modernisation and operational structure, the missions of the ROKN, officially divided into both peacetime and wartime are quite broad. Its peacetime duties; deterrence, protecting maritime sovereignty and rights, and supporting national foreign policy, fit within the parameters of the threat perceptions outlined above. The concept of deterrence is designed to ensure stability on the peninsula by ensuring the KPN will not attempt to break the armistice through the presence of overwhelming force on the southern side of the NLL. This mission requires the constant patrolling of the NLL and the ROK's coastal areas to prevent violations of ROK territory and the insertion of SOF personnel onto the ROK coast. The protection of maritime sovereignty and rights surrounds the threat to both the ROK's SLOC and to ensure that its EEZ is not violated and it is in this area, the newer missions of the ROKN become evident. Finally, advancing the ROK's foreign policy is a clear motivation for ROKN modernisation. The greater involvement of ROK forces in PKO and MNF missions is indicative of a more internationally involved country and for the ROKN, the dispatch of a ship to the Gulf of Aden suggests that the ROKN in its current

state is capable of fulfilling this role.

The ROKN's wartime missions are directly concerned with the prospect of all out conflict with the DPRK. In this context, the modernised ROKN has much greater potential for carrying out effective operations but will most likely be part of a US led force. Certainly the advanced platforms that have been procured would perform integrated operations to a better extent than the older vessels the ROKN previously operated. The three missions of sea control, power projection and protection of SLOC all suggest that the navy is attempting to deliver capabilities that were previously beyond it. Certainly sea control indicates a degree of confidence in their ability to operate within DPRK waters and to maintain control of their own however as with the rest of the wartime missions this should be seen within the context of alliance operations. Power projection is another area that ROKN has looked to develop either through the use of precision guided missiles or the delivery of amphibious forces, the development of an LPD alongside cruise missiles deployed aboard submarines and surface vessels suggest that the ROKN is better equipped to perform this task. Finally, SLOC protection, should not be seen in this context as being on a regional level, as this is something that will be guaranteed by the US, rather it is the assurance of open ports, the detection and discovery of KPN submarines and the prevention of mining in littoral waters.

The combination of these missions, structures and platforms demonstrate that the ROKN has aimed to meet its requirements in relation to the threat environment surrounding it. However, they face extreme difficulty in meeting the requirements of littoral and regional operations. It is clear that currently the ROKN is looking to establish a balanced force, one which is capable of blue water operations, but has its primary focus on the threat from the

DRPK. This is a key finding and it shows that ROKN modernisation is not just about the move toward the blue water but is a comprehensive program aimed at force improvements across the fleet. The future of ROKN development is currently uncertain, as construction programs are focused on patrol craft, amphibious vessels and frigates all of which are focused on littoral peninsular operations. In the face of this the ROKN has requested 15 more destroyers, however no concrete permission has been received or budgets allocated. This emphasises the issues that exist in modernising the fleet for two diverse mission sets under conditions of limited resources.

The issue of resources is only part of an overall assessment of the influences and hindrances on ROKN development. To understand the position of the ROKN within the ROK military and its goals of modernisation, it is essential to look at the US-ROK Alliance under which the ROK military was nurtured, equipped and funded in its formative years and significantly influenced by in recent years. Following the Korean War, the ROK was almost wholly reliant on the US for support; part of this reliance was in the command and control of its armed forces which had been granted to CINC UNC at the start of the Korean War. This put the US in a formidable position to control the direction the ROK armed forces would take, ensuring that they were equipped and performed roles that the US deemed appropriate. However, unlike the ROKA and the ROKAF, the ROKN was viewed as somewhat extraneous to requirements by the US and was equipped with the minimal amount of ships needed to operate in the littoral against what was a limited KPN. In part this was driven by financial concerns, but a major factor was ensuring that the ROK did not have an offensive capability with which to start a new war with the DPRK or upset the balance of power in Northeast Asia.

As a result of the ROK's burgeoning economy, a number of significant DPRK attacks on ROK territory and uncertainty over the US commitment to peninsular deterrence then President Park, Chung-hee undertook the *Yulgok* program which was aimed at developing a degree of independence from the US in terms of its ability to produce its own weapons systems in order to control the direction of its own force development. This initiative which lasted from 1974 to 1992 was based upon the fact that the ROK could now in line with its economic developments afford to pursue its own procurement and development capabilities. Although, much of the equipment purchases in this era did come from the US, there was a degree of diversification, specifically on items that the US were reluctant to provide to the ROK.

This period was a time of development for the ROKN, where the navy pursued the indigenous construction of its own patrol craft, corvettes and frigates, relying on the US only for heavy platforms which were provided in the form of aged although modernised WWII destroyers. The platforms the ROKN built were in some cases initially based on US designs, however in later years as they became more technically proficient this requirement was less necessary. However, while the hull design was indigenous, the weapon and propulsion systems were imported from a mixture of European and U.S. defence contractors. This ability to diversify their supply of equipment would last into the current modernisation period and is indicative of the reduced US influence over the ROKN which was mainly due to their lack of interest in ROKN development. The purchase of submarines from Germany, the first of which was launched in 1992 provides a good example of the increased ability of the ROK to procure from outside of the US when required and the

agreement that was made allowed the ROK to gain valuable experience in submarine production through the construction of 6 of the 9 vessels in the ROK which were supplied in Kit form.

This period did provide the ROKN with a large increase in their capabilities however the focus of their operations remained on the DPRK and despite the construction of frigates and submarines, they remained a coastal force. The other point to note about this period was the relative low ranking of the ROKN and the other services in relation to budgetary matters. The navy was very much the junior service in this competition and despite modernising did not have the funds to make large scale doctrinal alterations. The US influence in this period of time fluctuated between support and disinterest. The most important roles it played in the modernisation of the ROKN were first the initial support of ROKN indigenous construction, but then as a result of increased ROK independence, US disinterest allowed the ROKN to look to other sources of supply and as a result the US became a secondary factor in the ROKN modernisation.

Following *Yulgok* and into the present day, the US-ROK alliance has undergone significant shifts in its nature and objectives. The three most important aspects are the transfer of OPCON, the reduction but modernisation of USFK and the development of the alliance for the 21st century. The transfer of OPCON in a peacetime context occurred in 1994 and since then moves have been underway to transfer wartime control to the ROK. While this transfer was initially scheduled for 2012, it has since been moved to 2015 following the sinking of the *Cheonan*. What OPCON transfer means is the retention of USFK but also the requirement of the ROK to upgrade its systems to be able to perform theatre level

operations at a command level. This requirement must be seen in the context of the development and embrace of RMA by the US military. This factor which gained more prominence in 2005 when the USFK undertook an 11 billion dollar modernisation program following the withdrawal of 9000 troops stationed on the peninsula has had a significant impact on the thinking of the ROK in relation to the nature of its modernisation.

The requirement of developing interoperable capabilities with the US which would meet with the demands of the developments in RMA pushed the ROK to develop C4ISR, with a focus on sensor to shooter capabilities. What this has meant is a different level of technology for the ROK's defence industry to learn and develop and as a result many of these technologies have come from the US or its allies. The defence industry in the ROK, while still developing suffers from structural deficiencies and lags behind in the development of high-tech products, as a result the ROK despite committing to the indigenous development and design of defence items is often required to import weapons and is one of the largest arms importers in the world in terms of dollar value.

The impact on the ROKN of these developments is mixed, while in terms of procurement its vessels match the concept of indigenous/imported mix that was utilised during the later stages of the *Yulgok* program, it has slowly moved back towards the US in terms of sensors and weapons, this reflects the general trend in the current ROK-US arms trade. However, linking ROKN modernisation to the United States is more complex than just procurement.

The previous US disinterest in the ROKN continued into the early 1990's and it was only when the ROKN began to modernise that more joint exercises and a greater interaction

occurred. The US view on ROK regional operations was initially neutral but as the alliance has progressed, the US has seen the economic potential in terms of arms sales and the value of another ally armed with modern weapons in the Asia-Pacific region. Thus as the alliance has grown USN interest has grown too, but it is too far to say that the US and its navy were a direct driver in ROKN modernisation, but rather they were an influencing factor in line the general alliance trends.

The issue of maritime and naval identity is an interesting one in the context of the ROK and its navy. The inward nature looking nature of the ROK for most of its existence can be blamed with some credibility on the threat from the DPRK and the division of a homogenous people, however underlying this factor is a historic lack of identifiable naval characters in Korea and the traditional views of a country that more often than not looked toward China rather than the seas of Asia. However with the advent of democracy the alterations of the alliance and the development of the ROK in international terms alongside its increasing commercial maritime interests, the ROKN were provided with an opportunity to create a specific naval identity both within the public and political consciousness. The goal of these efforts was to cement support for the traditionally overlooked ROKN and provide the ideational backdrop for regional operations.

In order to achieve this, the ROKN began to use Korea's and the ROK's limited maritime history to provide the public with a frame of reference to understand what the role and goals of the ROKN were. The problem that existed for the ROKN is shown in the public's perception of Korea's most prominent admiral, Yi, Sun-shin. He was and to some extent still is identified more as a Korean hero through efforts to fight the Japanese in the 17th century

than as someone who fought at sea. This forced the ROKN into utilising a variety of methods to reclaim him including the naming of two ships in his honour in order to allow the public to relate him to the modern ROKN and the protection of the ROK. Another interesting example of this is the use a second figure, Chang-Bo-go, a 9th century merchant and admiral who controlled the shipping routes of Northeast Asia. The ROKN's increasing use of him in order to promote the concept of moving toward regional operations provides clear evidence of a methodology for naval identity creation through the use of history. Indeed the ROKN now names its larger platforms after significant historic figures and modern day naval heroes such as those that died fighting the DPRK during the second battle of Yeonpyeong in 2002. This is a deliberate policy used to integrate the ROKN into the people's consciousness, as a force which is modern, capable and forward looking but which is related to the heroes of Korea's past and present. Additionally, an even stronger message was made by naming the ROKN's LPD, its largest ship, the *Dokdo* after the contested island in the East Sea, which relates closely to the ROK's conceptions of nationalism and independence from Japan.

Alongside this policy the ROKN began a strong public relations campaign, explaining to the populace through booklets, the internet and television about the importance of the ROKN. This sort of message that is broadcast is typified in the motto 'to the sea to the world' which is on nearly every ROKN publication. It is this type of message that the ROKN is trying to espouse, one of modernity and that for the ROK to progress it needs to embrace the sea as a medium to do so.

However, while spreading the message to the public is important, of greater significance

are the efforts of the ROKN and the naval world to influence the political and decision making circles of the ROK. The major tool the ROKN has employed to do so are the shipboard debates, which are designed to educate a political class that has traditionally ignored the navy about the value of the sea and the need for a military presence on a regional level. The themes presented in each debate, the first of which was in 1992, surround the importance of the ROKN to the ROK's overall security, especially emphasising the development of the ROK in a political and economic sense and the commensurate need for a greater naval presence. The level of importance placed on these debates by the ROKN should not be underestimated and there is some evidence to suggest they were moderately successful. But perhaps greater stock should be placed in the fact that since their commencement the ROKN has received substantial political support from 3 of the past 4 governments.

There has also been a secondary avenue of approach to the creation of a naval identity through the use of naval institutes. Usually composed of academics and former naval officers, these institutes perform an important role through the publication of books and the organising of conferences in highlighting the ROK's need for a strong naval force both to the public and politicians. What should be drawn from their activities is the continued need to promote the ROKN within the ROK, as the creation of a naval identity is a long drawn out process. However the impact of such efforts has in the short term at least seen a significant effect as politicians of the democratic ROK supported and promoted the development of a modernised and more powerful ROKN.

The political support for the ROKN is the final element in explaining both its modernisation

and move toward regional capabilities. The election of Kim, Young-sam to the Presidency of the ROK in 1993 was a milestone in the history of the ROK, as the first elected civilian leader since 1962 he brought with him to office a series of policy reforms which would reshape the ROK military into its present form. He began with the removal of the structures which had allowed the military and specifically the ROKA to hold power for so long and through structural reforms, personnel changes and an anti-corruption drive he succeeded in civilianising the MND and replacing the cohort of officers who had vied for power for 40 years previous. At the same time Kim initiated the policy of *Segyehwa* or globalisation which was aimed at pushing the ROK towards the international community in an economic, political and social sense.

Without the domination of the army, the ROKN CNO was able to meet with the President in 1995 and despite opposition from the MND presented a plan to modernise the ROKN in way that would allow it perform regional operations. This regional goal matched the concept of *Segyehwa* and while in 1996 and 1997 the DPRK would loom large in terms of the nuclear crisis the naval development plan received continued presidential support.

It is this continued support that is vital to any form of force modernisation as it is an inherently long term project. Fortunately, the administrations of Kim Dae-jung and Roh Moo-hyun which succeeded Kim, Young-sam, had similar if more advanced policies which too met with the objectives of the ROKN's force improvement plans. Both Presidents embraced the concepts of moving the ROK toward having stronger regional roles and at the same time adopted more conciliatory attitudes towards the DPRK. While the former initiatives were not direct extensions of *Segyehwa* they were in the same spirit and allowed the ROKN to

continue to push for regional capabilities within this policy context. Indeed the approach toward the DPRK, while not lessening the ROKN's focus on the threat from the North did allow the navy to further justify naval development which was not strictly aimed at the ROK's traditional foe.

Both administrations undertook defence reform initiatives aimed at modernising the ROK armed forces and developing an independent defence capability which would be able to address issues on the peninsula and at the same time would have the ability to deal with future threats. In this vein, while ROKN reform plans had been developed before these presidents came into office their own defence reform plans matched the goals of the ROKN. Indeed in looking at Roh's Defense Reform 2020 policy, the objectives for the ROKN in terms of development replicated the extant plans. Therefore it is very important to understand the vital nature of such political support over this ten year period as it allowed the ROKN to develop its forces and concepts without interruption and set the foundation for a modern, regional capable force.

The presidency of Lee, Myung-bak highlights this importance, on his election he vowed to take a stronger line towards the DPRK and to rejuvenate the US-ROK alliance. As such his policies did not match the previous justifications of that allowed the ROKN to develop towards regional operations. While the extant platforms that were being developed were allowed to be finished, naval modernisation in terms of development of new equipment was put on hold as the administration looked towards reinforcing the ROKA. At the same time Lee continued to move the ROKN further into international affairs and committed the ROKN to its first true blue water mission. This strange contrast was amplified by the sinking of the

Cheonan which had a large impact on the development and posture of the ROKN.

After the sinking, the ROKN was forced into reappraising its role and the comparative strengths of the DPRK. While in reality they had always maintained their focus on the DPRK, the public and political perception at least in the aftermath of the sinking was that the ROKN had pursued its blue water agenda at the expense of the littoral. The danger is that the work that the ROKN had done in developing a new sense of naval identity will be eroded and for a brief time, they dropped the 'To the Sea, To the World' motto in a reflection of these perceptions. The President ordered the navy to concentrate on the DPRK's a-symmetric capabilities and the production new patrol craft and frigates was stepped up, potentially at the expense of the development of larger platforms given the limitations of the ROKN's budget which is the smallest of the three services. What this incident shows is 1) the importance of continuous support from the political classes so that its modernisation can continue and 2) the impact the actions can have on the ROKN.

Explaining the nature of ROKN modernisation has meant bringing the various strands, political, military and ideational together to form a conclusion. ROKN modernisation has not happened in isolation from the rest of the services and on one level is a reflection of an overall period of force modernisation underway in the ROK. However, the developments in the East Asia maritime sphere plus the ROK's greater international and economic interests moved the direction of modernisation toward the regional, a unique posture development in that it was the first service to look toward a different threat environment than the one on the peninsula. The key to understanding this modernisation is that it was not just about regional operations; it was a cross platform and mission development that was aimed at

providing modern capabilities throughout the fleet. The reality of the ROKN posture is the DRPK threat will always inform it and that significant political support is needed to ensure that regional operations and development continue. As such for the ROK there is tension between the traditional and the non traditional, for the ROKN and its modernisation it is this that has affected it both positively and negatively, either through the US and its neglect in its formative years to regional development and its importance to the ROK's international ambitions to the sinking of the *Cheonan* and the requirements of continued deterrence. Until this tension has been resolved ROKN modernisation will always be problematic despite the best efforts of the ROKN to promote itself.

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